

ESSAYS BY HUBERT  
(*of the Sunday Chronicle*)



HUBERT BLAND

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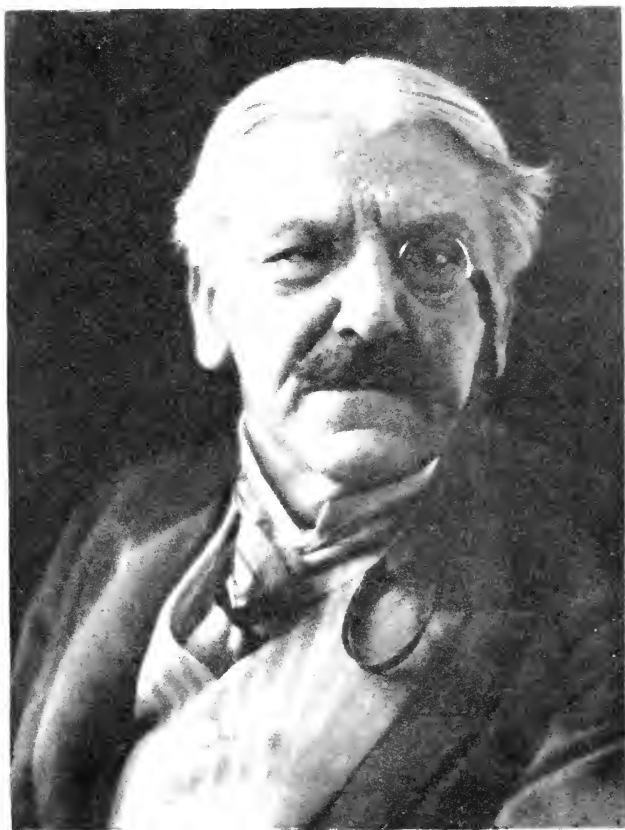




**ESSAYS**  
**BY**  
**HUBERT BLAND**







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ESSAYS  
BY  
HUBERT BLAND

“HUBERT” OF THE *SUNDAY CHRONICLE*

CHOSEN BY E. NESBIT BLAND

WITH AN INTRODUCTION  
BY  
CECIL CHESTERTON

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TO  
THE READERS WHO LOVED HUBERT  
THIS BOOK OF HIS ESSAYS  
IS DEDICATED BY  
HIS WIFE

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO  
PRESS

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## INTRODUCTION

It must be about ten years, I suppose, since I first went down to Well Hall, in Kent, in response to an invitation to call on Hubert Bland. I had made some sort of speech at the Fabian Society which had interested him. I was very young, but he, who was interested in almost everything, was especially interested in youth. "The respect due to youth" was a favourite phrase of his used quite seriously. He was fond of maintaining that the young were almost certain to be more in the right than the old, that the freshness of their point of view was more important than experience. He preached this view continually, and with something of exaggeration, I think; but it was a generous exaggeration, and it helped to keep the man himself perpetually young. Moreover, he practised what he preached. I have known him argue with mere children, and pay them not only the compliment of listening carefully to everything that they were trying to say, but the much higher compliment of consciously arming himself to maintain his ground against them as against equals. Bland was fond of quoting the phrase in his favourite play, Ibsen's

“Master Builder,” about “the younger generation knocking at the door.” The younger generation never had to knock at his door. If you were of the younger generation you always found the door wide open, and everything prepared most sumptuously in your honour. And then, if you were not a conceited fool, you very soon realized that you were very small potatoes indeed compared with your host.

For Hubert Bland was a very big man. That was the first impression that anyone who met him received ; and if it was not fully appreciated by the very narrow circle that stands for what is called “culture” in the wealthier districts of London it was apparent enough to the great mass of men of all classes in the North who looked forward every week to his articles in the *Sunday Chronicle*. He was a great journalist, and those articles, some of which are reproduced in this volume, represent, I think, almost the high-water mark of English journalism. The triumph of his genius was this, that he could interest a huge popular audience in things in which all the self-satisfied prigs and all the routine professionals would have combined to tell him that ordinary men could not be interested. A glance at the essays here reproduced will show how recondite, how far removed from what a superficial person would consider popular topics are many of the subjects which he treated. Yet so powerful was his gift of lucid exposition, so happy and vigorous was his method of illustration, that it was incontestable that his most

purely philosophical articles were immensely popular with the working men of the industrial North, from whom he was continually receiving letters asking for the further elucidation of the ideas of Hegel or Nietzsche or Bergson.

The man had a passion for ideas. I do not mean that he was a man blown about by every wind of doctrine ; no man was less so. But any idea that was presented to him he would seize upon with all the zest of a hungry tiger gripping its prey ; nor would he be satisfied until he had torn every scrap of truth that there was out of it. If it was a silly idea (like “ the Economic Independence of Women ”) it suffered severely in the process. But no idea, silly or otherwise, could be presented to him which he would not grasp, and on which he would not bring his admirable brain to bear.

This, however, would not have sufficed to make him the remarkable force that he was had he not also possessed a sense of human equality and brotherhood rare in literary men and still rarer in those who profess what are vaguely called “ advanced views.” He knew that he was interested in ideas, and he instinctively felt that other men must be interested in them. He was right. All men are interested in ideas if they can be made to understand them. It was Bland’s special genius and originality as a journalist, firstly that he perceived that this was so, and, secondly, that he had a gift for presenting ideas in such a fashion

that the ordinary man could appreciate their significance.

The reader of this volume will, therefore, find in it not only a series of very entertaining essays, but also something like the outline of a complete philosophy of life which commended itself to a man of strong and vigorous yet very well balanced mind.

It would be impossible in the brief space which can be allowed for this introduction to attempt to expound fully that philosophy which such a master of lucid exposition elaborated and enforced in a series of pronouncements which extended over many years. But certain aspects of it may legitimately be emphasized. Hubert Bland called the first volume of essays which he published "With the Eyes of a Man," and a title could hardly have been more fitly chosen. The foundation of his philosophy was the acceptance of all that a man naturally accepts and the rejection of all that a man instinctively rejects. On religion, on patriotism, on the honour which men have always paid to arms, on the differentiation of the sexes and their relation to one another, Bland always took the view that normal men take, although he argued the case for that view more ably than ordinary men can argue.

It was this normality of outlook that led the sillier kind of Socialists to distrust him as what they called "reactionary." Yet what they regarded as his "Toryism" was usually simply his humanity. For

instance, he paid a high honour to the profession of arms, as all men pay such honour to the profession of arms, unless mad or corrupted by cowardice or avarice or a false religion. He hated the interference of wealthy Puritans with the pleasures of the populace ; he hated it because, unlike most " intellectuals," he was a man physically and morally capable of sharing those pleasures. He was a Catholic because he felt that if one were to have a religion it must be a religion at once traditional and dogmatic. In regard to the sexes he knew that men were men and that women were women. His virility would have forbidden him to desire any alteration in this condition of things even if he had thought such an alteration practicable.

With all this he was a strong and sincere Socialist. He could not see that the opinion that the instruments of production should be the property of the Commonwealth and should be administered by its political officers had anything to do with the repudiation of nationality, or with the worship of cowardice, or with the denial of a God, or with the idea that men and women would be improved by trying to turn themselves into imitations of each other. On the contrary, I think the root of his Socialism was his intense Nationalism. He once said to me that there were two things without which you could not have a democratic state,—Protection and Conscription. I fancy that the same feeling which made him regard

the training of all citizens for national defence and the control by the nation of its foreign trade as essential to the idea of a free nationality, lent an attraction for him to the conception of a national organization which should control all the resources of the country. But the intensity of his own belief in Socialism, as he understood it, was the measure of his disappointment at much that came to pass for Socialism in England, whether it were only the timid futility of the Labour Party or the more perilous tendency to substitute a mere regimentation of the poor for that attack upon the great accumulation of wealth which he above all things desired.

His rooted belief in the eternal sanities gave to the mind of Hubert Bland a security which enabled him to play freely with any ideas that came in his way, without ever allowing any of them to sweep him off his feet. His very enthusiasms could not hurry him into fanaticism or upset the balance which his intellect continually maintained between apparently opposite truths. In this volume the reader will easily find examples of that almost eerie fairness which was one of his most characteristic qualities.

Thus in the battle that was raging round the central enigma of religion, he was on the orthodox side. He refused to accept a materialist explanation of the Universe as any explanation at all. To those who were on the same side in this contest it was an obvious temptation to decry, or at least belittle, physical

science. But Hubert Bland would have none of that. Physical investigation could not explain everything, but it could explain something; it was not the less worthy of its proper honour because silly people drew silly deductions from its teaching. Bland used physical science (which always had for him a paramount interest) with the freedom of the man who is equally conscious of its value and of its limits.

One may take another case. Bland was, during the whole of his exciting controversial career, largely concerned to defend what may be called the military virtues against a philosophy which denied or ignored them. Two men of genius appeared during the period of his literary activity who took more or less the same side. One was Neitzsche; the other Rudyard Kipling. It was inevitable that Bland should feel something in him respond to both. It would not have been surprising if either had completely captured him. But neither did completely capture him. He wrote sympathetically of Neitzsche and felt the full value of his protest against a stupid and cowardly Pacificism; but, wherever Neitzsche was hurried into denying fundamental truths such as the necessity of justice and mercy, Bland's sense instantly rejected the perversity. So it was also with Rudyard Kipling, whom he praised, justly and with understanding, so long as he was asserting neglected truths, but when that brilliant but unbalanced writer began to fall back on rhetorical partisan falsehoods, Bland turned on him and attacked him

with an effectiveness only possible to a man who had appreciated what was sound in his original gospel.

This normality and balance of outlook came out very markedly in relation to the question which most easily sends men mad—the question of sex. No one ever wrote more sanely or more delightfully about women. Several essays touching on this topic will be found in the present volume, and it will not be surprising if there are some who find the breadth, boldness and freedom of much that he has to say almost alarming. Yet here again the roots of his common sense always held. He never gave way for an instant to the sophistries of modern anarchism; nor are there any of the essays to be read here which are more effective, more convincing, or better worth reading than those in which, taking his stand on purely human grounds, he vindicates in its strictest sense the Christian doctrine of the indissolubility of marriage.

Hubert Bland was not the type of man to make disciples or indeed to wish to do so. He was always less anxious that people should agree with him than that they should agree with themselves,—that they should bring their own thoughts into order. He thought, and what he said and wrote provoked thought in others as it was intended to do. He had his reward. If he has left no band of chosen and dedicated pupils to swear by his name, he has left his impress, not only upon all those who knew him but upon hundreds of thousands who never saw his face and hardly knew his

name. His ideas have contributed to the intellectual make-up of innumerable men and women who have diverged in various ways from the faith which he held. And this makes it all the more desirable that every one should have an opportunity of reading his thoughts as they are here expressed by himself with an energy, a lucidity, and a picturesqueness which we shall not easily see again.

CECIL CHESTERTON



# I

## THE GRANDUCAL POINT OF VIEW

I SUPPOSE there is no imaginable mental attitude, no conceivable state of mind, from which the average man thinks himself to be more remote than that of a Russian Grand Duke. And, indeed, it does seem rather a long way from us all, doesn't it?—a trifle impossible to arrive at? There sits the Grand Duke, resplendent in his palace, surrounded by a circle of human beings each more or less intelligent, each a lackey, each a means towards an end, that end the splendour and security of Grand Dukedom. Beyond the palace walls stands another and a wider circle, also of human beings, rather less than more intelligent, armed with rifle and sabre and whip, ready to obey the word of command, even though the word be indiscriminate slaughter; each of these also a means towards the same great end. And beyond this second circle lies a wider circle still of millions of dim men and women who work, who do things and make things and think things to the immediate end, no doubt, that they may live, but to the ultimate end that Grand Dukedom may continue to exist magnificently, may have books to read, pictures to look at sometimes, uniforms to put on, railways and yachts to travel in, and socks to wear. Beyond that, again, spreads itself out the world, a field most obviously designed by God for Granducal sport, but which, so far, has not been

entirely subdued to the design. Very nearly though, for there are but few spots in it to which a Grand Duke may not go, to live joyously, spend royally, receive well-nigh illimitable deference; but still not yet entirely. There is Japan, for instance, where they have no present use for Grand Dukes except as prisoners without their swords. And the United States, where Mr. Roosevelt will not sit at the same table with them. So the world is not altogether the Grand Dukes', and that is the only fly in the Granducal honeypot.

Honestly, I do not think I have exaggerated or distorted the Granducal point of view in any way. I think, if you could get a Vladimir or a Sergius or a Boris, with his jack-boots on his legs and his Orders on his breast, opposite you in an armchair this morning, and put to him a few plain, blunt questions, he would answer you in a plain, blunt way, and his answers would let you see a state of mind pretty much as I have set it forth above. For a Grand Duke, unlike most of us, can afford to be plain and blunt. And you would feel as though you were talking to a being from another world, as unlike yourself as might be an inhabitant from some invisible star much farther away from your world than Jupiter or Mars. And yet you would be quite wrong, for the Granducal point of view is a thing very much of this world indeed. Moreover, it is the point of view which makes this world what it is, and prevents it from being what it might be. It is what has made the "changeless" East changeless, it is what constrains the changeful West to change so very slowly. For centuries it encrusted France in a crust so thick and hard that nothing less than a volcanic and fiery upheaval could break it and let the Frenchmen breathe free air. It held England, too, though not so hardly. It sent our cavaliers to die upon the field of honour; it united

the landowners in their resistance of the Reform Bill of '32, and it has upheld the forces of reaction in their resistance to every other Reform Bill since. In short, it is the quintessence of Conservatism, the worship of Things as They Are, a worship that never lacks for devotees. One visualizes it, realizes it, more clearly, incarnated in a Grand Duke, because a Grand Duke is, as it were, a City set upon a Hill ; but one may find it with no very sedulous searching in the valley, too. One may find it, I venture timidly to suggest, in one's own breast if one probes deeply enough.

We have here, at our doors, for instance, our own Lord Penrhyn, to name no other of his like, and to name him not too censoriously, or with over-reprobation. Lord Penrhyn will have no interference with "his" workmen in "his" quarries, and he would have his workmen themselves to "know their places," as the phrase goes. It is a pleasant phrase that, most useful in its various applications. I almost think it must have been invented in a Granducal palace. It is most abominably difficult to know one's place if it happen to be uncomfortable, or, at least, to know it and not desire ardently to get out of it. Revolutions, when you come to think of it, always occur because a lot of people don't know their places, or knowing, do not like them. But to return to Lord Penrhyn, to whom I feel I ought, perhaps, to apologize for my mention of him in this disastrous and sombre connexion. And yet I am not sure that the apology, if offered, would not be resented, for I incline to think that even now, when the world is ringing with Granducal crimes—the natural and inevitable outcome of the Granducal point of view—Lord Penrhyn would not rather, if he were invited, sit down to dine at a Granducal table than at yours or mine, would not feel himself more at home there. Crime is, after

all, a relative term, and Imperial uniforms and glittering Orders cover, yes, and cover up for centuries, a multitude of sins. At the same time I do not for a moment want so much as to suggest that Lord Penrhyn, or any other lord or lackey who has breathed English air, would imitate or condone Granducal methods. In England the truncheons of the local constabulary are all that is called for, mostly, when workpeople forget their places, and usually these are sufficient to awaken remembrance thereof; all I want to suggest is that, allowing for place and time and nationality, the point of view, the essential fact, remains substantially the same.

The Grand Dukes, it seems, are, or were, just going to "do something" for the Russian people. It was the aspiration of the Russian people to do something for themselves that caused all the trouble. There you have another phase, or aspect, of the point of view; that people in the lump must not be suffered to do things for themselves. The world would go smoothly, if slowly, enough were only people content to have things done for them, and to wait while benevolent schemes are hatching. And people do wait, wait incredibly. That's what is the matter with the world. The English people waited I don't know how long to get education: were waiting while the House of Commons in one year voted £70,000 for rebuilding the Royal stables, and boggled as only a House of Commons fulfilled of the Granducal point of view can boggle over spending £30,000 on popular instruction. And in 1868 came a wide measure of enfranchisement, and more people were enabled to do something for themselves; and in 1870 they did it; they established national education. That is only one small instance of what I mean, but it makes the matter clear, doesn't it? The fact is, the Granducal point of view doesn't work, neither upon a large scale nor upon a small. It will hardly work within the narrow limits

of a family. Do everything for your children, try, as they grow up, to prevent their doing anything for themselves, and, well, they won't grow up, or they will grow up to be very much what the Russian masses are to-day—not happy or exactly contented masses. Not contented; that again. Discontent, so far from being “divine,” as our philosopher called it, is, from the Granducal point of view, the very devil; a thing to be suppressed, obliterated; order must reign in Warsaw. That, also, is an application of the point of view which doesn't work somehow. Try that in your own family, in your own workshop, where you will, and you will get, inevitably—Russia.

The Granducal point of view is known to us all, known in the vernacular as “swollen head,” to philosophy as Egoism, called in the latest scientific jargon “megomania.” It is based on the firmly held idea that Oneself is the most important thing in the world, and, further, that other selves have importance only in so far as they minister to the Oneself. Its first tenet is that the world was arranged for Oneself to live in comfortably, and that the natural order of the universe is that which enables Oneself to gratify every desire, not with the least trouble, but with no trouble at all; that anything else is unnatural and somewhat askew. It seems a largish order when you look at it by the cold light of reason, doesn't it?—a pretty big claim to make upon the universe; but that, and no less than that, is the claim of the Grand Dukes. In Granducal circles Egoism is raised, no doubt, to its highest power; but it exists in circles less distinguished, less elevated. I stumbled across it in one much less elevated a day or two ago. I was talking to a very charming young woman who has health, beauty, and as many of the good things of life as a paternal income of three thousand a year or so can give her. She was

telling me of "an awful misfortune," as she called it, that had recently happened to a school friend of hers. Owing to a financial mishap to Gladys' father Gladys had been compelled to put her expensive education to some practical use, and partially to earn her own living. Didn't I think it was "frightfully hard lines" on Gladys? I was asked. I replied simply and directly that I didn't, and the girl looked at me as though I were a harmless lunatic. Then she proceeded to reason with me gently, to remonstrate with me kindly, as one does with a person of whose intelligence one has the meanest opinion. "Don't you understand," she persisted, "that Gladys will hardly be able to go anywhere, even when she's asked, because she won't be able to afford new dresses; she'll have to get up quite early in the morning, and do all sorts of horrid things. She won't even have a carriage to take her to places, but will have to go in hateful cabs."

"Oh, not omnibuses?" I said.

"Well, no; I don't suppose it will be quite as bad as that," the delicious young person went on, "but she'll have to meet all sorts of objectionable people away from home, and do everything for herself when she's at home!"

"What!" I cried, "no maid?"

She shook her head dismally.

"And she'll really have to brush her own hair, and put away her own frocks, and clean her own boots?"

"No, no, no," she exclaimed, "not clean her own boots. They'll be able to keep a couple of servants, of course. But still you do see how *frightful* it is, now don't you? Now you understand you do admit that it is the most awful hard lines?"

"It is just because I do understand that I do not admit," I replied. "My dear young lady," I went on, "you try to understand too, will you? For a

certain number of years now an enormous number of people, a whole world in fact, have been working for, doing things for, your friend Gladys. Her father has been busy every day in the City, busy and worried for Gladys, and his clerks have been busy and worried, too. Away in France workmen have been toiling to make silk for her frocks, and away in China—I feel sure she drank China tea—more workmen have been planting and picking that she might be happy at five o'clock every afternoon. Men have been facing danger and death on the Dogger Bank that she might have her *sole à la Normande* or her *turbot au gratin* at 8.30 P.M. From all parts of the world at once captains are navigating and seamen sailing ships which are bringing things home to Gladys. Every day another young woman, very much like herself, brushes the dust from her gowns, a boy cleans the mud from her boots and her bicycle. The bed on which she slept has been made by somebody else; somebody else, I make no doubt, opened the door for her and shut it after her when she left her house; certainly somebody else cleaned the steps which she soiled with her feet when she returned. When you come to think of it, a vast, an almost incalculable, amount of human labour has gone to the making and maintenance of Gladys. The world has done a tremendous lot for her, and now what has she done for the world? Consented to exist beautifully, I suppose?"

"No," she shook her head a little dubiously; "Gladys is not a pretty girl."

"Then she has done nothing at all," I said; "and now that circumstances have called on her to make some small return for all she has received, to do something to justify her existence here below, you ask me to call it 'awfully hard lines.' Well, for the life of me I can't."

"Well, anyhow, I do," was all I got for my pains. The Granducal view is not to be shaken by argument.

It dies hard, as I said, and the death of it is mostly catastrophic. When it is upheld on a million or so of bayonets, having nothing to speak of in the way of brains behind them, its disappearance—its modification, I should say, for it never disappears—is likely to shake the planet and the noise of it to reverberate through history. But let us comfort ourselves with the reflection that it does the old world no end of good to be shaken, and that the very best and the very strongest buildings we know are those that have been builded upon ruins. Revolutions never happen until they are badly wanted—and not always then.

1905.

## II

### COURAGE IN CRITICISM

THE recent lecture by Father Hugh Benson on "The Modern English Novel," in which the lecturer, himself a novelist of some standing, confessed that he was entirely unable to read the novels of Sir Walter Scott, and added that such inability "shows there must be something wrong with me," has occasioned a good deal of comment, written and spoken, in literary journals and in places where men chit-chat on literary topics.

The general opinion would seem to be that in proclaiming himself unable even to read the works of a great Classic, of one who, in his own time, was hailed as the Father of Modern Romance and The Wizard of the North, Monsignor Benson displayed almost unparalleled candour and almost unexampled courage. With that general opinion I am rather inclined to agree ; but at the same time I doubt, I doubt extremely, whether such candour is altogether wise, and whether such courage is altogether worthy of commendation.

The question is more interesting—even of more immediate interest—than at first you might think, for the Classics are very much with us just now. They are, as Mr. Whistler scoffingly said of art, "on the town." Thanks to the enterprise of certain publishers, there is to-day scarcely a work, either English or foreign, to which the term Classic can be justly applied which may not be obtained, satisfactorily bound and

clearly printed, by the outlay of a few shillings, in some cases of a few pence. To-day, great and renowned books which hitherto, to the many, to all intents and purposes, have been sealed books, are open to everybody.

Of course, everybody will not read them. The popular novelists, the literary ephemera of the moment, have little to fear from the competition of the mighty dead; but I am told on good authority that vast and quite unanticipated numbers of people are reading them, or, at any rate, are buying them. And that, I confess, is, to my thinking, one of the most satisfactory and cheering social phenomena of our time.

It is a phenomenon, too, which gives an importance it never had before to the question—the question which I propose to talk about and around in this article: What should be the attitude of the lecturer towards the Classic or writer on literary topics? Stated more explicitly, the question is this: Should he give his readers frankly and without reservation his own individual, personal tastes, opinions, and judgments, or should he try to give them a sort of blended essence of the tastes, opinions, and judgments of critics more eminent than himself, who have gone before; of the critics, that is, who have made the Classic classical? I find I have not stated that question as clearly as I could wish, but I have stated it as clearly as I can, and you must forgive me if it is a trifle obscure.

It may be professional uppishness (I daresay it is), but I do feel that a somewhat heavy responsibility rests upon any writer who is criticizing a book, either old or new, but particularly when it is old. Rightly or wrongly, wisely or unwisely, readers of literary journals and newspapers do attach weight to the opinions of the critics. By those opinions they are often induced either to read the book criticized or not to read it, as the case may be.

I have no doubt whatever that there were among Monsignor Benson's audience some persons, probably young persons, who either had not read any of Sir Walter's novels, or who, having just glanced through some of the worst of them—say "The Monastery," "The Abbot," and "St. Ronan's Well"—had found them unattractive, will now not read any of them; but who, if they had been "let alone," one day, when perhaps there was nothing else of a literary sort handy, might have picked up "Guy Mannering," "The Talisman," or "The Heart of Midlothian," and derived from those stories as much pleasure and profit as were found therein by such perceptive critics as John Ruskin or Andrew Lang, and by their own fathers, grandfathers, and great-grandfathers before them. That, I cannot help feeling, is a pity.

I was glad that Monsignor Benson admitted that the fact that he was entirely unable to read the works of Sir Walter Scott or of the Brontës showed that there was something wrong in him, and I sincerely hope that he did not say it out of the pride that apes humility. I think there must be something wrong in a man, an educated, cultivated man, who is entirely unable to read a great Classic.

I do not mean something morally wrong: I mean something intellectually or æsthetically wrong, something lacking in percipience, some defect of the faculty of appreciation. To think less highly, much less highly, of a Classic than its contemporaries thought of it, or than one's own contemporaries think of it; that is one thing. But to be entirely unable to read it, to be unable to give oneself so much as the chance of appreciating it, that is another, and a very much sadder, thing!

For consider what a Classic is. It is a work which has survived the destructive, the dissolvent, influences of time, and the tremendous competition of ten thousand other books, which has proved itself impregnable

to the attacks of fashion. Think of the great multitude of books that time has destroyed, that fashions in taste themselves long dead have cast upon the rubbish heap, never to be repicked therefrom.

For there is a tremendous struggle for life among books as among organisms, a struggle from which only the strongest emerge. I won't say only the best, for to say that were to raise moral issues, but assuredly the strongest. The fact that a book has survived three generations of readers and still makes a strong appeal, if only to a comparatively small number of readers, warrants you in at least attempting to read it, in seeking to discover the secret of its survival-strength; and warrants you, too, if you find yourself quite unable to read it, in concluding that there is something wrong in you. It is probably good for you to recognize that, to know a little more about yourself than you knew before.

What are the qualities which go to the making of a Classic, which give perdurability to Literature, which confer what we cheekily call immortality upon an author?

The first and far away the most important of them is fundamentality (a word which I have the authority of the "New Oxford Dictionary" for employing). By the quality of fundamentality I mean the quality which enables an author to treat of those passions, emotions, aspirations, speculations, which are fundamental in human nature, which have their sources in the very deeps of our being, and which are common to all of us.

No book can live for centuries or even for decades whose subject-matter is not the things which live for centuries or for decades. I think one might safely say that a book perishes when the essential thing it deals with, criticizes, expounds, or merely presents, perishes. There you have the explanation of the death of so many books which, and the complete obscurity of so many authors who, have created a tremendous

furor in their day and generation. Their vogue was transitory because transitory were their themes.

Opportunities for testing the correctness of what I have been saying are always to hand. We have constantly, especially in the provinces, revivals of plays which enjoyed blazing popularity at the time of their first production, which then received the approval of the most discerning critics and the plaudits of crowded audiences. Go to the next of these revivals that comes your way, and the chances are at least twenty to one that you will find it to be the dismalest and most boring of entertainments.

Only a quarter of a century may have elapsed since its first appearance, yet you will vote it old-fashioned, and your vote will be on the right side. Old-fashioned it will in all human probability be, and that not in the least because of the costumes of the actors or of the social customs they reproduce, but because of the sentiments the author puts into their mouths. Those sentiments will be the expression of opinions which were held at the moment but which have ceased to be held to-day, sentiments which were based on some passing caprice, some transient fashion of thought, and not upon anything that was fundamental in the human mind, not upon anything that mattered, so to speak, not upon anything that is always there. These, not the accessories, date the play; and the Classic is never dated.

Books that express opinions only, no matter how brilliantly, how pointedly, how convincingly, never become Classics, for opinions change, become obsolete, as often as not ridiculous, even as clothes do. One might as accurately speak of a classic pair of breeches as of classic opinions. Books that express merely opinions once strongly held are to be found in dusty ranks on the shelves of all our libraries, but they are just old books, they are not Classics. To take rank as a Classic a book must present emotions, feelings—

feelings and emotions at work, acting and reacting among men—bringing about scenes and situations, comic or tragic, catastrophic or jolly, but scenes and situations all the same.

After witnessing one of these revived dramas I spoke of just now, go home, take down from your bookshelves a volume of Shakespeare, the one which contains *Othello*, and read for half an hour or so before going to bed. You will probably not have read so long as that before you begin to realize why the play you have just seen is old-fashioned, while *Othello*, though centuries older, is a Classic and is not fashioned, either old or new.

You will soon observe that what critics call the motive of the drama, the spring which directly or indirectly sets all the human machinery to work and brings about the inevitable and tragic end, is not peculiar to any climate or to any period, is deep-seated in the very heart of man, and is discoverable even in brutes.

The scene is Venice (it might as well have been Bethnal Green), the costumes are—but what does it matter what the costumes are?—it is not of the costumes you will be thinking as you read *Othello*. There may in some far-distant century dawn a day on which the passion of jealousy will be eradicated from the heart of man. That day's sun ere it sets will witness the end of *Othello* as a Classic.

You will observe also—and here is the second essential quality of the Classic—that the story, just as a story, is wondrously told. You will find yourself fascinated by the mere phrasing, charmed by the music of the lines; in other words, there is supreme beauty of form as well as supreme beauty of thought. That combination you will find in every great work of literature that has held its own through the centuries; in "The Book of Job," in the dramas of Euripides, in "The Pilgrim's Progress." In the great Classic the

manner fits the matter as a well-shaped glove fits a well-shaped hand.

If you are inclined to doubt the validity of this criticism test it practically for yourself. Pick up any great literary achievement written in any language known to you, upon which successive generations of critics have set the seal of their approval. Open it at any page, read the first passage that meets your eye, then take a pen and piece of paper and try to paraphrase that passage. Try to say the things said in a better, a more convincing, a happier way than that in which the author has said it. Should it strike you that he has been too verbose, try if you can be more concise. Has he been obscure? Seek to clarify him. In this way I think you will learn better than in any other what qualities are needful to the making of a Classic.

By this time I hope I have made it sufficiently clear why I hold that in the criticism of Classics candour should be tempered with caution. It is not enough for the critic to give utterance merely to his likes and dislikes; he must needs adduce reasons for his preferences and aversions. For example: Monsignor Benson did tell his audience why he could not read the Brontës. It was, he said, because whenever he read a novel by them he seemed "to be under some sort of nightmare, with too much clothes on the bed." All that criticism amounts to is that he does not like nightmare effects in literature; but some of us do. I do, for one, and for those of us who do it is just the nightmare quality of "Wuthering Heights" which gives to that wonderful book its irresistible fascination. I wish he had told us also why he could not read the novels of Sir Walter.

My advice to those who have not read the novels of Sir Walter is to start upon them forthwith and not to be deterred by the lengthy descriptive passages with which too many of them begin. It always took

him some time to get into his stride, but it was quite a wonderful stride when he did get into it. Give yourself a chance anyway. It seems a pity, you know, not at least to taste a vintage which has given exhilaration and refreshment to so many millions of your kind.

1914.

### III

## THE TRAGEDY OF THE VILLAGE

IN view of the interest which will presently be aroused in the Land Question, an interest precursory signs of which are already discovering themselves in political speeches and in political leading-articles and even at by-elections, it is surely desirable that those of us who have time and opportunity should make ourselves acquainted with some of the historic facts concerning the land and the methods by which vast portions of it have come to be in the hands in which they are.

To that end no one can do better just now than read a book which I have just finished reading. The title of it is "The Village Labourer, 1760-1832, a Study in the Government of England before the Reform Bill."

The object of the writers of the book was to describe the life of the agricultural classes during the period when their only security against destitution and practical slavery was being taken from them by their rulers, the gentlemen of England. That object the writers have most completely and brilliantly achieved. The book is a masterpiece of lucid arrangement and graphic presentation of necessary detail. It is a convincing narrative from which nothing that is essential is omitted and to which nothing is added that is superfluous or by way of rhetorical flourish. It is an informative history, not a political polemic designed to

engender class prejudice. Yet it is one of the most irrefutable and crushing indictments that has ever been brought by historians against a governing class.

The deed was done, the deed of spoliation, the land, or to be quite accurate, the use of the land, access to the land, was taken away from the people at the only moment in our history when it could have been done with little risk of successful popular resistance. Never before had there been, and never since has there been, a time when the territorial aristocracy had the bodies and souls and possessions of the rural population so absolutely in their power, so supremely at their disposal, as they had in the period between the outbreak of the French Revolution and the passing of the great Reform Bill. Parliament was their plaything, the members of it their nominees.

It was next to impossible for the most gifted of politicians to gain entrance to the House of Commons except at the will and pleasure, and with a view to serving the interests, of some great territorial magnate. These magnates commanded the sources of what was ironically called Justice. The judges of the higher courts shared their prejudices, the magistrates and Grand Juries were composed either of themselves or of their friends and creatures.

It is not too much to say that with anyone below a certain social rank living under their dominion they could do as their caprices prompted or as their interests urged :

“ Magistrates could administer in this uncontrolled capacity a drastic code for the punishment of vagrants and poachers without jury or publicity. The single justice himself determined all questions of law and of fact, and could please himself as to the evidence he chose to hear. In 1822 the Duke of Buckingham tried and convicted a man of coursing on his estate. The trial took place in the duke’s kitchen. The witnesses

were the duke's keepers. The defendant in this case was not a poacher, but a farmer."

One reads a good deal in the records of that time of "rogues and vagabonds," for the laws which dealt with them were of an incredible ferocity, but it is needful to bear in mind that these unfortunates were neither vagabonds nor rogues by choice. They were men whom the Enclosures Acts had dispossessed of their holdings, men who but a few years before had been earning a sufficient and a decent livelihood upon the land that had given them birth. Many of the men who were battered by keepers, or mangled by spring guns, or sent into the unspeakable gaols of the period for killing a rabbit had in their day been the possessors of a cottage and a cow. From free labourers they had by Act of Parliament been converted into servile paupers.

The deed which deprived the villager of his liberty and his living was done deliberately; it did not come about in one of those odd phases of economic or industrial evolution for which nobody in particular can be said to be responsible. It was not, for instance, like the coming of the machine industry. That came, as it were, not by the conscious will of man; it came as part of an inevitable and an inexorable world process, a process which could be neither foreseen nor hindered.

The seizure of the land was designed, elaborately thought out, carefully carried into effect. As our authors say:

"The agricultural community was taken to pieces in the eighteenth century and reconstructed in the manner in which a dictator reconstructs a free government. . . . Let us remember what this community—the village community—looked like to men with the mind of the landlord class. The English landowners have always believed that order would be resolved into its original chaos if they ceased to control the

lives and destinies of their neighbours. The English aristocracy, always thinking of their class as the pillars of society, as the Atlas that bears the burden of the world, very naturally concluded that this old peasant community with its troublesome rights was a public encumbrance."

The freedom of the peasant to earn his living independently of wages paid and determined by his landlord was a noxious thing, a thing characterized by Lord Sheffield in Parliament as a "nuisance." The writer of a Report to the Board of Agriculture in 1795 asserts that :

"The possession of a cow or two with a hog and a few geese naturally exalts the peasant in his own conception. In sauntering after his cattle he acquires a habit of indolence. Day labour becomes disgusting . . . and at length the sale of a half-fed calf, or hog, furnishes the means of adding intemperance to idleness."

Oh, dear me ! How often have we heard similar sentiments expressed by persons without the possible excuse of aristocratic birth and tradition !

So the land was taken away from the labourer. It did not slip away from him as the hand-tool slipped from the hands of the hand-tool worker when the great machines came. It was taken away from him by law, backed by force, by law made by men who did not represent him, who represented nobody but themselves. These men wanted the land, and they just took it, and if anything could add to the iniquity of this legalized plunder it was added by the fact that the thing was done in the name of religion, of morals, and of science. It was taken away without compensation to the people who were actually dispossessed.

Let us never forget that. When the time comes to deal with the land again let us remember that the

last time the land was dealt with the very notion of compensation was scouted by the confiscators. "These cottagers often received nothing at all for the right they had lost, the compensation going to the owners of the cottage only." Six million acres of land were taken away.

The authors of "The Village Labourer" vouchsafe us a few vivid glimpses of the state of England which followed immediately on the act of robbery. Here is one :

"In passing through a village in the county of Norfolk a few years ago, to my great mortification I beheld the houses tumbling into ruins and the common fields all enclosed ; upon inquiring into the cause of this melancholy alteration I was informed that a gentleman of Lynn had bought that township and the next adjoining to it ; that he had thrown the one into three and the other into four farms ; which before the enclosure were in about twenty farms ; and upon my further inquiring what was becoming of the farmers who were turned out the answer was that some of them were dead and the rest were become labourers."

Here is another :

"The common was very extensive. I conversed with a farmer and several cottagers. One of them said enclosing would ruin England ; it was worse than ten wars.

" ' Why, my friend, what have you lost by it ? ' "

" ' I kept four cows before the parish was enclosed, and now I don't keep so much as a goose ; and you ask me what I lose by it ! ' "

Then food became dear. Hitherto the villagers had enjoyed a fair sufficiency of milk supplied by their own cows. The enclosures banished the cows, and there was no more milk. The people, in that obstinate, pig-headed way they have, made a hard fight to get

wheaten bread, and their masters were characteristically shocked at their demand for this quite superfluous luxury. "Let them eat oats and rye," said the rulers; "it's much better for them." Said Lord Sheffield in an address to Quarter Sessions:

"If any wretches should be found so lost to all decency and so blind as to revolt against the dispensations of Providence, and to refuse the food proposed for their relief, the parish officers will be justified in refusing other succour, and may be assured of support from the magistracy of the county."

How nobly the parish officers responded to the appeal, how whole-heartedly the magistracy afforded the support, may be gathered from the following extracts:

"There were English villages in which it was the practice of the overseer to harness men and women to the parish cart, and the sight of an idiot woman between the shafts was not unknown within a hundred miles of London.

"There was a severe overseer at Ash who had among other applicants for relief an unemployed shepherd with a wife and five children living at Margate, thirteen miles away. The shepherd was given 9s. a week, but the overseer made him walk to Ash every day except Sunday for his eighteenpence. The shepherd walked the twenty-six miles a day on such food as he could obtain for his share of the 9s. for nine weeks, and then his strength could hold out no longer. The shepherd was an industrious and honest man, out of work through no fault of his own."

Deprived of their food and of any possible means (except from the hands of such overseers) of getting it the villagers naturally took to poaching, for the new enclosures teemed with game. But here the gentlemen of England were once more ready for them.

An Act was passed which provided that a person who was found at night *unarmed*, but with a net for poaching, in any forest, chase, or park was to be punished by transportation for seven years.

In the three years between 1827 and 1830 one in seven of all the convictions in the country were under the Game Code. Over 8500 persons were convicted under that code, many of them boys under eighteen years of age. Some of them were transported for seven and fourteen years, and some for life. Several men who worked upon the roads at sixpence a day were hanged for resisting the gamekeepers with arms in their hands.

And yet there was no peasant revolt, still less a peasant revolution, as there was in France on the part of a people suffering under similar provocation. The territorial aristocracy triumphed all along the line. They had beaten the very bowels out of the people. Never in the history of Europe had so great a deed of plunder and oppression been carried out with so little inconvenience to the plunderers and oppressors.

There was nothing worthy to be called a revolt, but there were a few disturbances, a few ricks were burned, a few machines broken, a few hirelings of the landlords' agents, overseers, and others made fearful of their lives and pockets. The story of the suppression of these disturbances and the punishment of the disturbers is told on one of the blackest pages in England's history. In one town alone, Winchester, three hundred prisoners were brought before the judges charged most of them with offences which to-day would receive scarce a passing notice in a local newspaper. And this is the sort of thing that happened :

“ George Steele, aged eighteen, was sentenced to transportation for life for obtaining a shilling when he was in liquor. William Sutton, another boy of

eighteen, was found guilty of taking fourpence in a drunken frolic. Sutton, who was a carter boy receiving 1s. 6d. a week, was given an excellent character by his master, who declared that he never had a better servant. The jury recommended him to mercy, and the judges responded by sentencing him to death, and banishing him for life."

The story told in "The Village Labourer" is the story of a hideous, an unimaginable wrong. It is a wrong that can never be redressed; it is a wrong, the dire results of which are with us to-day in every sordid broken hopeless village in England. When we come to the adjustment of the land question, it is fitting that we should remember this wrong, not in anger or revenge, but in justice.

1912.

## IV

### THE SOUL OF A GENTLEMAN

WHEN I say of Cassilis that he is a gentleman I am using the term "gentleman" in just its ordinary sense, in the sense in which we all of us use it when we use it without spoken qualification or mental reserve.

I do not mean in the least that he is the soul of honour; that he is a man who in no possible circumstances could be guilty of a base or cowardly action, or a mean thought; or be impolite to women, or uppish to inferiors, or disloyal to his King or unfaithful to his friend. Indeed, I do not think that I mean to imply possession by him of any moral attribute whatever.

I should not dream of saying either to him, or of him, that he is one of "Nature's gentlemen," for I have not the faintest idea what part Nature, or what part art, has played in the constitution of his being. This I feel sure of, though, that if I were to call him to his face one of Nature's gentlemen he would hotly resent the imputation, and not improbably would cut my acquaintance there and then, for he would feel that I was in some way casting reflections upon his social behaviour.

And I daresay he would be right. For when one says of a man that he is one of Nature's gentlemen one usually means that he is a considerable way from being any other sort of a gentleman; one means that his moral qualities more than compensate for his

lack of social graces. Now I am quite sure that Cassilis would rather be accused of a vice than of a solecism. I feel almost as sure that he would rather be guilty of a vice than of a solecism, for I take it he knows himself to be at least capable of the one, while he prides himself, and perhaps with justice, on being wholly incapable of the other.

I do not for a moment mean that I have any reason whatever to suspect that Cassilis is not the soul of honour, or that he has ever been guilty of baseness or cowardice, or harboured thoughts to which an honest man may not give house-room and maintain his honesty. For aught I know to the contrary, his honour is as unscratched and unstained as a newly minted sovereign.

What I do mean is that even if he were to poison a grandmother, or forge a will, or turn tail on the field of battle, he would still be a gentleman. He would be a gentleman avicide, a gentleman forger, a gentleman runagate; a disgrace and discredit to his order, of course, but still distinctly of his order.

Some one—I forget who—has said that by the constitution of this realm the King can make any cobbler a nobleman, but can not make any man a gentleman. Well, King Destiny might make of Cassilis a pauper or a felon, but even that all-potent monarch could not make him “not a gentleman.”

If you were to meet him in the street, as I met him yesterday, you would categorize him at once in your mind as a gentleman, and that not altogether because he is about the best-dressed man that Savile Row and the most efficient valet in London turn out. No, there is something subtler in it than that.

I am confident that if Cassilis lost his reason or his income and came down in the world, as we say, and were to present himself at your door in broken boots, in fringed trousers, in a ragged coat which had never

been made for him, with a knotted handkerchief instead of a collar round his throat, with matted hair and a week's growth on his chin, asking for a job of work in the garden, or a letter to the Charity Organization Society, what you would say to yourself would be, "Good heavens! That poor fellow is a broken-down gentleman." You would have no doubt at all about the gentleman.

One of the definitions of that ambiguous term gentleman is "a man who is not compelled by necessity to work for his living." It is an wholly inadequate definition, of course, much too widely inclusive; but, even so, Cassilis would fall within it. Cassilis has never done an hour's work in his life, an hour's remunerative work, I mean, of course, an hour's work of the sort that Society would consent to pay for never so poorly.

There was a moment in his life, though, when it looked as if he would have to take a share in the common lot. It was very soon after he had come down from Oxford, where he had taken a degree, but without any added distinction. His father died suddenly, leaving little or nothing but debts behind him. But Death, which struck hard at Cassilis with one hand, held out a gift to him in the other. Just as he was looking about for "something," as he put it, a spinster aunt died, too, leaving him a competence.

Cassilis devoted no portion of this competence to the liquidation of the paternal liabilities. "You see," he said in explanation, "Aunt Emily was not on speaking terms with my father and didn't approve of his way of running things. I was her favourite nephew; she paid for my education. The dear old girl would not lie quietly in her grave if she thought any of her money was going to clear up any of the mess my father left behind him. No, I feel bound in honour to regard the wishes of the pious testatrix."

I have noticed with interest that gentlemen of the Cassilis type generally do feel bound in honour to do the convenient and personally profitable thing.

Mind, I do not think it would have mattered much to Cassilis, that it would have made any fatal or catastrophic difference to his career, I mean, even had Aunt Emily not departed this life at that opportune moment or had otherwise disposed of her property. I think Cassilis assuredly would have got "something"—some easy and agreeable occupation, with remuneration sufficient to moderate needs; and his remuneration, probably, would have been at the public expense. You and I would have been contributing our quota towards paying his tobacconist's bills and his club subscriptions.

Imagination declines to contemplate a man like Cassilis clubless and without good cigars. This is a hard world, I often say, but it is not such an unthinkable hard world as that! For Cassilis was born a member of the governing classes, and in whatever else the governing classes may fail they rarely or never fail in their duty to themselves or to their kith and kin.

This happened before the days of Mr. Lloyd George and the Labour Exchanges and the National Insurance Act. But, although patronage had not encroached quite so far upon open competition as it has to-day, it was not unknown even then. There were "soft" jobs going, and Cassilis quite inevitably, quite naturally, in the order of things, would have been popped into one of them, for, besides possessing influential relatives, he was a good-looking, well-mannered young fellow, and sat gracefully and comfortably in the pockets of the wives, mothers, sisters, and aunts of high-placed political personages.

He himself is of opinion that but for Aunt Emily he would at this moment be helping to manage the

diplomatic affairs of Great Britain in some foreign capital, or assisting further to muddle our system of National Education at Whitehall.

I do not think I will attempt to describe Cassilis' personal appearance to you, because you may see him for yourself on any fine day in the Season when you may happen to be in London and to take a walk along Pall Mall, up St. James's Street, and up and down Piccadilly. Or if you don't meet the man himself you will meet dozens of other men so closely resembling him as to be indistinguishable from him and from one another. You will, if you are at all perceptive, recognize Cassilis' type by a certain air it has.

Look a little closely at all the other men you meet, and you will not fail to notice that they appear a little anxious about something—I can't put it more definitely than that—their eyes are a little restless, the corners of their mouths a little strained; they seem to be half-expecting something, half-apprehending something; they move their necks uneasily within their collars; their gait is either too purposeful for real purpose or too leisurely for true elegance.

But, look as closely as you will at men of the Cassilis type, and you will note none of these indications of unrest or of mental or moral disturbance. Their whole aspect seems to declare in modulated tones, "We are very well, indeed, thank you; there is nothing whatever the matter with us or with the world. We've had an excellent breakfast; presently we hope to have, nay, we are quite sure we shall have, an equally excellent luncheon, with the right sort of dinner, in due course, to follow, and a very pleasant evening."

I confess that when I sat down to write I designed to give you more or less of an epitome of Cassilis' views of men and things. But when I came to think

it over I remembered with some dismay that he had no views, no views of his own, I mean ; that in his opinion to be "viewy" is to be almost damned. He never attempts to form opinions ; he acquiesces in opinions formed in what he holds to be the right quarters. Contrary opinions he just flicks aside almost as instinctively as he flicks the ash from his cigar or a trifle of dust from his coat-sleeve.

Sometimes he seems conscious that there is a world in which these other opinions find vogue, may possibly take shape in action, action which will, to some extent, discommode the world which is his. But, and here it is that I seem to get now and then at the real soul of the man, at the innermost faith of him, he discovers a calm confidence, rooted in an inexpugnable conviction that if ever that other and outer and bigger world should break rudely in upon that smaller, Olympic region which is his, he and his friends will be fully equal to repelling the invasion and giving the invaders what for.

This confident, unruffled attitude of his often irritates me, and I try hard to discover the warrant for it, if warrant there be. I think it comes of a belief of his, a belief which is as much as and more a part of him than the nose on his face. For, though time may alter the shape of that nose it will never change that conviction that he and his set, their circumstances and their manner of living, are part of the Order of Nature, immutable as the stars.

Of course he knows, for he has the usual slight smattering of scientific knowledge, that even the stars are not quite immutable ; but they are immutable enough for all practical purposes, and the soul of Cassilis is a practical soul. This creed of his is as near, I think, as he gets to religion, although his grandfather I have heard was a bishop.

I once tackled him directly on the matter. We were sitting in the big bay window of the Chrysan-

themum Club smoking-room, looking out across Piccadilly and the Green Park. A police-shepherded procession of unemployed, or of strikers, I forget which, had just passed by.

"Tell me, Cassilis," I said, "why do you think you are here? Oh, I don't mean here, in this window, I know that—it is just to pass a digestive hour. But in this world—or in this universe, if you like?"

He took my question more seriously and was rather longer in answering than I had expected.

"Oh, well," he replied at last; "that's easy. We are here to have a good time and keep ourselves fit."

"Fit for what?" I asked.

"For whatever we have to do," he returned.

"That seems pretty sound," I assented. "But what in particular do *you* keep yourself fit for?"

"Oh, just for toddling around—which, by the way, I must be doing," he said, standing up.

"To have a good time and to keep oneself fit for toddling around," I repeated. "There's a lot of horse sense in that, Cassilis," I added, "more than I should have credited you with. You ought to employ some of your ample leisure and your turn for epigram in writing a new catechism, a catechism for gentlemen with incomes of four figures derived from gilt-edged securities."

"Not I," Cassilis returned. "I don't set out to be pious, you know; I don't set out even to be serious-minded. I may perhaps be the giddy butterfly you think me. Well, butterflies have their place in the scheme of things. There've got to be butterflies, you know. But you don't catch me guying religion. That's rank bad form, anyhow. Religion," he repeated, resuming his seat and taking a cigarette from his case; "what should we do without religion? We should have to pay up for a lot more of those chaps,

anyway," and he pointed to a dozen policemen who were marching in file along the opposite pavement.

That was the most penetrating glimpse I ever achieved into the soul of Cassilis. I feel no confidence that if I had probed deeper I should have discovered more.

1912.

## V

### THE DECADENCE OF RUDYARD KIPLING

HAPPY in many things, in nothing was Rudyard Kipling more happy than in the time of his literary arrival. At the end of the 'eighties we were all in a dumpish mood. For something like a decade nothing that was stimulating and many things that were depressing had happened to us. From the point of view of social reform there had been ten sterile years. A goodish few of us were heartily ashamed of ourselves and of our period.

In the realm of art and literature the atmosphere was soppy and relaxing. There was much fine accomplishment but a dismal lack of tone. In a few small literary coteries Browning was read a little and talked about a good deal. Rossetti and Morris and Tennyson were more read and less talked of, and for these great men's work, exquisite though much of it is, often as it achieves artistic perfection, it can hardly be claimed that it makes for masculinity, that it does much to brace the spirit or harden the moral fibres. One of the trio had declared himself in so many words to be "the idle singer of an empty day." For the satisfaction of his own emotional nature he had sought to fill the emptiness not with the kind of men, women, children, and things he might have seen had he looked for them in the teeming world all about him, but with

fantastic creations of his own imagining called forth from a historic period that had never had any existence—Geffray Teste Noires, Guys of the Dolorous Blast, persons who dressed habitually in tabards and hauberks; Jehane du Castels, Ellayne le Violets, damosels who sang amorously in a strange dialect and who by their own confession had all too often misbehaved themselves shockingly. In poetry the erotic and emaciated damosel with her unintelligible refrains was very much with us. The weird presentment of her may still be seen in the pictures of the late Sir Edward Burne-Jones. We loved her; I can't think how we did it, but we did. That precisely was what was the matter with us; and when she wailed that two red roses were doing something indefinite with the moon, or that the "graves stand gray in a row," we thrilled to the very core of our being and felt that we were indeed in intimate relations with the very last embodiment of refinement and culture. The high priests of art repelled by, or afraid of, the real world, sought and found refuge in bizarre unreality. Tennyson, it is true, was to some extent an exception. Now and then he sounded a trumpet-like note, and as for reality, well, he did portray for us the demure ideals and the decorous conventions of the rectory drawing-room. Tennyson had the root of the matter in him, and had he begun to work at the end of the nineteenth century he would be more read at the end of the twentieth than he is likely to be.

Social life in the 'eighties was more interesting and necessarily more real than art. It was the period of the Socialist pioneer and the Emancipated Woman. A good many of the freer spirits turned to Socialism because there it seemed to us could we find that new thing in the way of ideas for which we were half-blindly groping. The Socialist pioneer was interesting indeed. He was nearly always in a rage, and when

contradicted or even questioned he became violently abusive—a habit which, I regret to say, has survived maturity; but at least he was a live man who meant business, and it was a delight either to agree or to quarrel with him. The Emancipated Woman too had her points—sharp as needles they were. Let loose by Miss Olive Schreiner from an African Farm, she had a lurid career in Europe. She irritated, bewildered, fascinated, and finally bored us.

The time was ripe, rotten ripe, for a new man and a new method; for a man who, and a method which, should differ as widely as possible from the old gang and its ways both of thought and expression. Whether he came as a revolutionist or as leader of reaction his welcome by England was assured. There needed a man to do for Art at the end of the nineteenth century what Burns and Wordsworth had done for it at the end of the eighteenth—to smash and scatter the old conventions, to let sunshine and fresh air into darkened, overheated chambers; to tell us of the things of the day in which we lived in the tongue of the day in which we were living.

In fullness of time Rudyard Kipling came and, like many another upsetter of established things, he came out of the East. About the end of 1889 we had begun to talk of him. Three years later he was out and away the biggest figure in English literary life. It had taken this young man of twenty-seven just three years to win for himself a position in the front ranks of art from which no one but himself could ever displace him. He had the distinction of winning at once the noisy applause of the mob and the high approval of the elect.

The first taste of his quality was given us in "Departmental Ditties." His had been a prophetic soul indeed who from a reading of that volume could have foreseen the coming of "Barrack-Room Ballads" and "The Seven Seas." It consists largely of graceful and

sprightly *vers de société* and topical jingle. But the jingle is jingle of a rare sort. It has humour, it has extraordinary felicity of phrase ; it has no little pathos. Over and above it has, in a marked degree, that in which the art of the 'eighties was so sadly to lack, the inestimable quality of high spirits. Here, one felt, was a young verse-writer, scarcely yet a poet, who tingled with the joy of life and who wrote for the very fun of the thing ; who had not forgotten what it feels like to be a schoolboy ; who with all his heart might say, and who did indeed say later in his " Sestina of the Tramp Royal " :

*Gawd bless this world ! Whatever she 'ath done  
Excep' when awful long—I've found it good.  
So write before I die, 'E liked it all !*

It was a new and a most exhilarating note. No wonder our poor little poeticules and the whole tribe of Tomlinson shivered when they heard it.

The publication of " Barrack-Room Ballads " in 1892 proclaimed a new poet. Kipling was no longer a promising versifier but a poet, and above all a new poet. He had a good deal to say and he had found the exactly right form in which to say it. He had arrived at the quintessential of fine literary style ; that is to say, the fitness of the form to the matter. That is what style means, and style means precious little else than that. A critic who talks to you about " poetic diction " is on the intellectual level of the young lady behind the draper's counter who chatters of art shades and art colours, not knowing that every colour is art when it is laid upon the canvas by the brush of a master.

But even from the most conventional point of view " The English Flag " is a poem. Test it how you will it will abide your question. It is correct in form ; it is aflame with passion ; from first to last it has

not an ill-chosen epithet or a falsely turned phrase. The motive of it, the conception, that of the four winds replying in turn to a query concerning a thing that they see more often than they see most things, "The English Flag," is as happy as it is original.

It is upon the "Barrack-Room Ballads" proper, the soldier songs, that most of the superfine critics and humanitarian sentimentalists have fastened as evidencing the faults of Kipling's character and the blemishes of his art. With the moral issues raised I have nothing just now to do, I want only to touch on the artistic quality of these lyrics. Note, then, first their marvellous breadth of range. They present the common soldier, and the common soldier, one would suppose, is not a complex personality. Yet these songs run up and down and up again the whole gamut of human emotion, from the white-faced horror of Danny Deever to the drunken delirium of Belts. The poet plays upon every string; he is consummate master of his instrument, or, to use a more correct simile, of his orchestra. Sometimes his humour is amorously reminiscent as in *Mandalay*, sometimes deep down in the darkness as in *Cholera Camp*; in half a dozen lyrics full of the lust of blood, again pavid with coward terror as in "That Day." What other poet, again (and many have attempted it) who has ever tackled the subject of woman seduced, betrayed and deserted has done it with half the forcefulness, with a tithe of the true tragedy, that Kipling has put into "Mary, Pity Women"?

Note again, I ask you, the variety of emotion expressed, and note further the variety of metre, of form, in which it is expressed. In every instance the metre, the refrain, fits the thought as the scabbard fits the blade.

Take as examples the dreamy, melodic lilt of *Mandalay*:

*No, you won't 'eed nothin' else  
 But them sp'icy garlic smells,  
 An' the sunshine and the palm-trees an' the  
       tinkly temple bells  
 On the road to Mandalay ;*

and the haunting refrain of "Kabul River :"

*Ford, ford, ford o' Kabul River,  
 Ford o' Kabul River in the dark ;  
 There's the river low and fallin', but it ain't  
       no use a-callin'  
 'Cross the ford o' Kabul River in the dark.*

How perfectly the music utters the emotion .

These soldier songs have had to stand up to a hostile fire of criticism poured in from some unexpected quarters. They have been called rude, brutal, vulgar, and—save the mark—illiterate ! They are said to utter the feelings of the gin-palace in the dialect of the gutter. The late Mr. Robert Buchanan, himself something of a poet, complained of Kipling that he dealt with the amours of a common soldier and gave us to understand that he was at the worst a blood-thirsty ruffian, at the best an extremely vulgar and objectionable young man. All this I might for the moment let pass as falling under the head of moral rather than of art criticism ; but the implication is that the songs are not poetry, not fine art that is, not poetry as "The Lady of Shalott" is poetry. That is the criticism that I want for a moment to tackle, because if true it would apply not only to the soldier-songs but to a good deal other of Kipling's finest work such as "The Bolivar," "The Mary Gloster," and "McAndrew's Hymn." This criticism, I suggest, is born partly of prejudice, prejudice against certain opinions ; but mainly it comes of ignorance as to what constitutes the essential of poetry. This type of critic is in the same state of mind as those who

scarified Shelley, who cold-shouldered Wagner, who attacked first the Pre-Raphaelites and then the Impressionists. He is merely hard-boiled in the shell. His mind is unadaptable. He has a certain set of rules and canons. Take them away from him and he is lost and less likely to form a just view than the man in the street whom he despises. He has been limited in his reading, and he has become so accustomed to seeing only certain characters, certain episodes, certain imagery, dealt with in what he believes to be poetry, that all others are to him unpoetic, and if they fall below a certain social level—generally his own—vulgar. For example, the intrigue of a mythical mediæval queen such as Guinevere with a knight who wore a suit of fashionable armour he would feel to be romantic. The fall from virtue of a housemaid and a corporal in the line would for him be revolting vulgarity. He has not the wit to see that the romance or the vulgarity lie entirely in the emotional relations of the parties to the offence. A queen's liaison might well be disgusting; a housemaid's romantic.

Rudyard Kipling, as I said, was a "new" poet; in his own phrase, "new as the new-cut tooth." If we are to estimate him justly we must test him by a set of new canons. He was content to accept the modern world as he saw it—tramways, trade unions, and all. Benares, Lahore, and the strange cities of the East were glamorous to him, but no more and no less glamorous than San Francisco or Bethnal Green. He was obsessed by the vision of life. When he wanted romance—and he was a great romanticist—he never looked for it from out of

. . . *magic casements opening on the foam  
Of perilous seas and fairy lands forlorn;*

he just ran down to the nearest quay or railway-station.

In an appendix to "Lyrical Ballads," Wordsworth, foreseeing the disappearance from modern life of

much that had hitherto been taken as essential to romance and poetry, saw also, as in a Pisgah vision, the coming of such a poet as Rudyard Kipling. Wordsworth too was new. Wordsworth too was an innovator; but Wordsworth had not, as Kipling had, the faculty of appealing to the market-place as well as to the study, and in so far as he had it not he was a lesser man than Kipling. Said Wordsworth in the appendix: "Poetry is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge; it is the impassioned expression which is the countenance of all science. In spite of the difference of soil and climate, of language and manners, of laws and customs, in spite of things silently gone out of mind and things violently destroyed, the poet binds together by passion and knowledge the vast empire of human society as it is spread over the whole earth and over all time. . . . Poetry is the first and last of all knowledge—it is as immortal as the heart of man. If the labours of science should ever create a material revolution, direct or indirect, in our condition, and in the impressions which we habitually receive, the Poet will sleep then no more than at present. He will be ready to follow the steps of the man of science, not only in those general indirect effects, but he will be at his side carrying sensation into the midst of the objects of the science itself. The remotest discoveries of the chemist, the botanist, the mineralogist will be as proper objects of the poet's art as any upon which it can be employed. . . . If the time should ever come when what is now called science, thus familiarized to men, shall be ready to put on, as it were, a form of flesh and blood, the poet will lend his divine spirit to aid the transfiguration and will welcome the Being thus produced as a dear and genuine inmate of the household of man."

Well, in the closing years of the last century the material revolution of which Wordsworth spoke had happened. Those things were familiar to us, so familiar

that familiarity had almost bred contempt, until Rudyard Kipling came to touch and illuminate them with romance and poetry; and this he did not by bringing the poetry to them, but because he had the spiritual insight to perceive the poetry that was in them already.

*Lord, send a man like Robbie Burns to sing the song of steam!*

\* \* \* \* \*

*Oh, for a man to weld it then in one trip-hammer strain  
Till even first-class passengers could tell the meaning plain,*

cried McAndrew, Kipling's old Scots engineer. Kipling himself answered McAndrew's call. He did with a trip-hammer strain teach the first-class passengers what the second and third class were not so slow to perceive. Much of Kipling's popularity has been due to the method and manner of his expression, but more still has been due to the fact that he has given voice to the thoughts and emotions of inarticulate millions. And to do just that is a large part of a great poet's mission to men.

Just as much of Kipling's early verse was jingle, so much of his prose work was journalism. But it was good journalism; it hit and stayed where it struck. One ringing sentence and you had your picture—a thing seen, as it were, by flashlight. Too often, it is true, you not only saw your picture but you saw the man who worked the lantern and the mechanism itself. There were tricks and mannerisms; new mannerisms and tricks most effective, but they suffered somewhat, it must be confessed, by over-use. In short, somewhere in Kipling's stories he who seeks shall find well-nigh every fault—every fault, I was going to say, but dullness. Alas! I could have said that once; I cannot say it now. Still, one may say this—that you may winnow away at his first four prose volumes and when you have winnowed your worst

and your best there will still remain sufficient for the making of one stout volume of the best stories ever told in the English tongue.

I don't propose here to analyse and dissertate upon the elements of the ideal short story as distinguished from what we usually call a novel. We are all agreed, I take it, that a short story must be short, that it must present an episode or episodes in logical connexion, that the moment it depicts must be dramatic or at least tense. More than that we do not ask of it, and even that we do not often get. It were futile to complain of Kipling that he, essentially a short-story writer, has not created or developed complex or elusive characters after the manner of Balzac or George Meredith. As well might you find fault with Corot because he has not covered as much canvas as Paul Veronese. Until masterpieces are measured and judged by the foot-rule Rudyard Kipling will stand clear of such comparison. What the short story can do that Kipling could do and did in the short story. He seldom or never failed to bring off the thrill, whether it was of pathos or dread, of passion or humour. His methods were as many and as diverse as his motives. Sometimes he produced his effect by the careful elaboration of minute detail; sometimes by a broad swift flash, as it were, by a tightly clinched, pregnant sentence; sometimes by vivid realism, at others by elusive suggestion; but ever and always the thing he wanted to do was done. I should think twice before saying of Kipling that he was ever a great dramatist, because greatness in dramatic art, I take it, implies development of personality. We must see the character not merely pushed here and there by the motive as a thing external to it, but itself making the motive, and from our knowledge of the character and its motives we must recognize the actions to be inevitable. But if Kipling was never a great, he was one of the skilfullest dramatists that ever wrought.

When the climacteric moment was reached his effects were brought off in half a dozen sentences and there was never an anti-climax. His feeling for a curtain was infallible. As one example among many, just recall to your minds that last meeting of the death-stricken hero of "Love o' Women" with the woman he had destroyed. The thing is done before we know where we are, and we find ourselves quivering before we quite know what we have to quiver about. That is what a dramatic moment should be. The workings of intelligence should stop, and emotion should be supreme.

Kipling has never, so far as I remember, created a complex character and suffered it to work itself out under our eyes. His characters are generalized rather than individualized; but for what they are they are complete enough. We know of them just about as much as we should have known had we seen them acting in the particular episode or episodes presented. In only one case has he attempted development of character, in that of the heroine of "The Light that Failed." Maisie is well enough so far as she goes, but we feel that there was much more of Maisie that was worth knowing than we are suffered to see, or than Kipling himself had ever divined. I incline to think that the greatest of all his creations is Terence Mulvaney. But Mulvaney is epic rather than dramatic in treatment, and by putting him into so many stories his creator had the opportunity of showing him from many points of view. Mulvaney embodies the irony of life. He is a figure of tragedy.

If Kipling's women fail in interest it is because of that generalizing habit of his to which I have referred. All that he seeks to delineate in women is the eternal feminine functioning on the particular social plane on which he has set it. Thus to some extent they are all alike, as looked at from a certain point of view all women are alike. Whether it be Mrs. Hauksbee

and her set or Dinah Shad ; the mother and daughter in " The Gadsbys " or Ameera in " Without Benefit of Clergy "—the best short story that ever has been written in English—each and all are finally reduced to a common denominator. The differences are on the surface, the resemblances are in the depths. This view is common enough, and is as true as it is common, but it is not the whole truth. Kipling himself has stated it in the lines :

*When you git to a man in the case  
They're like as a row of pins,  
For the colonel's lady and Judy O'Grady  
Are sisters under their skins.*

I have noticed in women of my acquaintance a disposition to resent the dictum. The resentment I can understand, but when they deny its accuracy my attitude is one of deferential scepticism.

Kipling's men, too, are pretty well all of them turned out of the same mould—at least all the men he obviously likes and with whom he obviously sympathizes. They are grown-up schoolboys ; men who have never outgrown their schoolboy ideals, never outworn their schoolboy hearts. Their man of the worldly air never deceives us for a moment. Life for them is a big playground in which much of the fun is fighting, and in which every game is to be played with an almost barbaric and pedantic regard for the rules and the etiquette.

No other writer, certainly no other man, has ever written of children quite as Rudyard Kipling wrote in the height of his power. I do not mean that his children were always true to child life. There is a thought too much of the adult occasionally lisped out in the child-language of some of them, but others are quite perfect. It is rather in his portrayal of his own feeling for them, of the man's feeling as distinguished from the woman's, that he stands quite alone. He

has recognized that the maternal instinct is not the sole monopoly of one sex. Remember Strickland's attitude towards his baby son, and Captain Gadsby's. In his whole handling of children, in the emotional atmosphere in which in his best stories he surrounds them, he plumbs a depth of tenderness reached among English writers only by two women, George Eliot and Julia Horatia Ewing.

The mention of children carries one straight to the "Jungle Books." The "Jungle Books" are works of genius. They are that and something more than that. They are apt examples of the peculiar genius of Rudyard Kipling, the genius which attains its end immediately and never has to wait for triumph. The author was crowned in every nursery while the book-covers still were redolent of gum and before the pages were grubby. Mowgli and Bagheera, Rikki-Tikki and Baloo, promptly took their places beside Alice and the White Knight, the March Hare and the Mock Turtle. I have never heard but one hostile criticism of the "Jungle Books." It is that Kipling has fallen into the fault of Landseer and has over-humanized his animals. But surely what was a defect in the painter is a merit in the writer. For a painter's business is with externals only; a writer must needs psychologize. And how in the world were beasts to have been made interesting to anyone but a professor of natural history except by endowing them with the emotions and motives of men? And after all, Kipling's beasts are very real beasts indeed. Men who have closely studied wild life and who are by no means unbalanced admirers of Kipling have assured me that here, at least, his observation has never failed him and that his knowledge is little short of stupendous.

So far I have been treating of the rise of Rudyard Kipling, a rise almost unparalleled in the history of modern literature. No other man of our time has achieved so rapid and so unchallenged a literary

pre-eminence as did he. No statesman, no conquering warrior, has ever won for himself such a national tribute of anxiety, of sympathy, of prayer, as did Kipling during the period of his serious illness in America. It is not too much to say that had that illness ended fatally it would have been felt by all of us to have been a national, nay more, a racial calamity.

I now have to turn to a much less pleasant aspect of my subject, the obvious, the lamentable, the almost inexplicable decline of his literary power. That decline seems to have begun somewhere about the year 1899, or about seven years after the publication of "Barrack-Room Ballads." One would have expected that the chief event of the year 1899 would have made a very special appeal to Kipling, would have evoked from him all that was in him of inspiration, for that was the year of the South African War; the warlike spirit, patriotic emotion, Imperial instincts, Imperial aspirations—these had been the themes on which his genius had been most liberally lavished. Well, in October of that year England went to war—went to war, as many of us believed then, as many of us believe now, in a just cause, and only after long and repeated provocation. Kipling's admirers, the whole nation that was, looked to him for a song, for a great song, that should voice in inspiring and inspiring words the emotions and hopes and fears that were filling all their hearts; a song at least as fine in quality as "The Hymn before Action," or as England's Answer in "The Song of the English." He gave us "The Absent-minded Beggar," that deplorable jingle which evoked, as it was calculated to evoke, nothing more worthy of evocation than the raucous applause of the music-halls.

The South African War brought many disasters to England, and for those who hold a nation's art and literature to be among the most valuable of its possessions, not the least of those disasters was the deadening

and destructive blow it seems to have struck at the genius of Rudyard Kipling.

If you will keep your eyes on the dates I am going to mention you will find, I think, that my fixing of the year 1899, the year of the war, as the turning-point in Kipling's career is less fanciful than at first blush you might suppose. The very best of his lyrical work—the high-water mark of it—with few exceptions, is in the volume called "The Seven Seas" that was published in 1896. It contains "The Sea Wife," "The True Romance," "The Flowers" and at least half a dozen other indubitable masterpieces, quite enough of themselves to have made and sustained a poetic reputation. In 1903 was published "The Five Nations," and that volume too contains some fine work. It contains, for instance, "Recessional," one of the noblest and one of the few great hymns in the English tongue. But "Recessional" was written in 1897, and if you make a critical study of the poems in "The Five Nations" you will, I think, be driven to the conclusion that with the exception of one poem called "Lichtenberg," a rather beautiful poem, all that is worthy of the poet who wrote "The Flowers" was written before 1899. Most of the poems treating directly with the events of the war are little above the level of "The Absent-minded Beggar."

Now for the prose work. No one whose critical faculty is worth mentioning will question for a moment that the high-water mark of Kipling's prose was reached in "Life's Handicap" (1891), "Many Inventions" (1897), "The Day's Work" (1898), and "Kim" (1900). Very well, in 1904 we had "Traffics and Discoveries," containing only one fine story, only one story in any way worthy of the author of "Without Benefit of Clergy." That story, "They," of all in the volume, alone discovered the true Kipling touch, the touch of genius which pierces to the heart and brings the lump to the throat—the literary touch, that

is. The other stories discover only the journalistic touch. They are clever journalism. They have humour, observation, technical skill in a high degree, but of inspiration not a flash.

What is true of these other stories in "Traffics and Discoveries" is true also of all the stories in "Actions and Reactions" published in 1909. These stories are not only journalism but many of them are not even clever journalism. They are note-book journalism, mechanical journalism. They positively fatigue the reader with a multiplicity of inessential, tedious, and often quite incomprehensible detail. Many of them can be read intelligently only with the aid of a technological encyclopædia. "Puck of Pook's Hill" I have not read, and so of it I may not speak, but I have within the last year read the continuation of it, "Rewards and Fairies," or as much of it as I could manage. Some of the stories in this last volume would pass without comment, either of praise or of blame, had they been written by an author of second or third or fourth rank; but when we remember that they were written by the author of "Wee Willie Winkie" our feeling about them is that of puzzled dismay. "The mechanism is here all right," one catches oneself saying, "but where is the magic?" And the children of the book! They are said to be a boy and a girl, but one has only Mr. Kipling's word for that. They appear to be only two little sawdust-stuffed dolls, one in knickerbockers and the other in skirts. We know that one is meant to be a boy because it occasionally does something with a pocket-knife, and that the other is meant to be a girl because it has a tender feeling for animals, but there all resemblance to anything like human childhood begins and ends. And this from the man who has written of children as no man or woman has ever written of children before!

I cannot end this dismal story of decadence without

referring to Mr. Kipling's latest appearance as a poet. Some year or so ago, I think it must have been, some verses over his name appeared in the *Morning Post*. I confess that when I read them the words of the Bible sprang to my lips: "How art thou fallen from Heaven, O Lucifer, son of the Morning! How art thou cut down to the ground!"

Here is one line from that set of verses:

*Of the tribe which describe with a jibe the perversions  
of justice.*

If that line with its paltry rhymes—tribe, cribe, jibe—had occurred in a comic opera, even then one would have felt some passing pity for the brain of the man who perpetrated it. Had it been written by a schoolboy of twelve trying to be clever one would have endeavoured on one's own side not to be hard on the lad. But when written by the hand that wrote "Recessional"—well, one feels just that burning sensation of shame, that sort of pitiful vicarious humiliation, that one feels when some old man whom one has loved and admired in his prime babbles and drivels in his senile decay.

But Rudyard Kipling is not an old man, and we must look elsewhere than in senile decay for this unimaginable falling off in the quality of his work.

What I suggest is that certain germs of evil—to use rather a strong term—which were observable in his mental and moral constitution from the first have developed at the expense of other germs, germs of good, that were obvious in equal, nay in much larger, numbers. There was always in his work, except in the very best of it, a certain jarring, discordant note of—what shall I call it?—of brag and bluster, of sham masculinity, of affected robustness. Those of us who admired and believed in him most were often hard put to it to defend him against the accusation freely brought of blind and flamboyant

jingoism. We defended him on the grounds that though he was a man in years, he was a very young man, and that he still preserved the heart of a schoolboy—of a jolly, rollicking, high-spirited British schoolboy, the sort of schoolboy who honestly believes that one Englishman can lick three Frenchmen any day of the week. We asserted and believed that his faults were faults that time would cure. In healthy schoolboys time does cure them, but alas! it has not cured them in Kipling, it has enhanced and emphasized them. The healthy schoolboy's overconfidence and boastfulness are transmuted by time and experience into measured confidence and quiet self-reliance and sound judgment. During the South African War Kipling, like the rest of us, discovered that not only could one Englishman not lick three Frenchman but that three Englishmen found extreme difficulty in licking one Dutchman. He discovered that many of those clean-limbed, well set-up public school men of whom he was so inordinately proud, whom he had regarded as so enormously superior in physical and mental make-up to the rest of the world, in the hour of trial turned out to be ineffectual, blundering, lacking in the very qualities with which he had so lavishly endowed them. And so the very foundations of his confidence were shaken; and they have never been rebuilt.

His work always gave evidence of an undue admiration, of an almost morbid love of strength, of mere material force, as such. It was said of him, not altogether without justice, by my friend Mr. G. K. Chesterton that he loved England not because she was England but because she was great. But with all that, there was evidence too of a love of righteousness and of a true feeling for the moral and the spiritual in national life. We hoped and believed that time would ultimately blend these two loves into one love and that the day would come when his incomparable

gift of song would be devoted to the service of an Empire that was great and free and just, and great because it was just and free. We had some right to believe that when we read such lines as these :

*If, drunk with the sight of power, we loose  
Wild tongues that have not Thee in awe,  
Such boastings as the Gentiles use  
Or lesser breeds without the Law.*

Could we doubt that by the Law was meant the moral Law of Righteousness, of Justice, of Love ?

What would seem to have happened is that the love for the spiritual and the moral forces of life has waned and the rather brutal admiration of material power and success has waxed, until material power and success have become idols on whose false altars all the fine ideals—the ideals of sympathy, of kindness, of charity, of sacrifice—are to be ruthlessly immolated. If our country is to be great, according to this later gospel of Kipling's, all she needs is to be strong, to have millions of armed men, thousands of ironclad ships, to have her sword not only always buckled on her thigh (for that were well) but always drawn and flourishing about her head. Given that flashing sword and naught else matters. The condition of the masses of her sons and daughters, of the workers in her factories and her mines and the toilers in her fields—these people, these people who *are* England, never come for a moment into Mr. Kipling's purview.

The miserable result of this setting up of a materialist ideal, this loss of a spiritual conception of life, this forgetting of social justice, is that Mr. Kipling now writes verse which is not only execrable as art but which is mendacious nonsense as well. How execrable is the art, how mendacious the nonsense, judge from these lines culled from that set of verses in the *Morning Post* :

*The tares they had laughingly sown  
Were ripe to the reaping,  
The trust they had leagued to disown  
Was removed from their keeping ;  
The eaters of other men's bread, the  
Exempted from hardship,  
The excusers of impotence fled,  
Abdicating their worship.*

I am not sure what this is all about. The language is as obscure as the thought is foggy, but one just guesses that somewhere at the back of his mind the writer imagines himself to be saying something severe about Mr. Lloyd George's Budget and that the "eaters of other men's bread" are the poor old people for whose exiguous pensions the new taxes had been levied. If that is not what he means, then frankly one must give up trying to discover his meaning. And yet he can hardly mean that, for anyone with the brains of a guinea-pig (and Rudyard Kipling has more brains than a guinea-pig) must surely know that they who eat other men's bread are they who consume wealth which they have done nothing to create ; that is to say, they whose incomes the new taxes most shrewdly touched. Again, in the same set of verses Kipling asks ironically :

*. . . Who has toiled ? Who hath striven  
And gathered possession ?  
Let him be spoiled. He hath given  
Full proof of transgression.*

Presumably those who had toiled and striven were Lord Rothschild, Lord Onslow, Lord Egerton of Tatton, and those millionaires who a week before the verses appeared had foregathered in the City to denounce the land and the supertaxes.

It is a piteous and a pitiful thing this decadence of Rudyard Kipling. We have seen something a little

like it before when Wordsworth fell out of the fighting line ; when

*Just for a handful of silver he left us,  
Just for a ribbon to stick in his coat ;*

but never before in the proud history of English literature have we been called upon to witness quite such a downfall as this. And it all comes of the mean admiration of mean things, of things which look great but which are essentially small, of the wilful blindness to fine ideals. The poison which has entered into Kipling's soul has destroyed his art. As one thinks of it one experiences a feeling as of physical nausea, one wants to cover one's eyes and, to quote the last words of Macaulay's essay on Bacon, to "turn away from the checkered spectacle of so much glory and so much shame."

1910.

## VI

### TO A WORKING MAN

MY DEAR SIR,—You ask me what, in my opinion, is the most marked characteristic of the English working classes, and by working classes you say you mean the men and women who work for weekly wages which seldom or never rise above two pounds a week. For the life of me I cannot imagine why you want to know my opinion or what interest my answer can have for you ; still, I take it, your request is a compliment to me personally, and being somewhat of a vain man I find I cannot refrain from acceding to it.

Here goes, then. A close and serious study of the social history of our country for the last hundred years or so, and an interested and, I hope, an intelligent observation of contemporary facts, have convinced me that the most marked characteristic of the English working classes is Patience.

Now Patience, like most other human qualities, may be good or it may be evil ; it may be a high virtue or a low vice. It may indicate fine intelligence or extreme stupidity.

Let me illustrate my meaning. A man who is smitten by an incurable disease, a disease for which science has so far discovered no remedy or even alleviation, and who doesn't whimper or whine about it, or make himself a nuisance to his family and friends, who bears it "like a man," as we say, who keeps a

cheerful countenance, and continues to do what little work his affliction permits him to perform, is a fine and a wise fellow, and, in his way, a hero. But one who suffers from some ailment known to be curable, and who refuses to consult a doctor, or to buy a bottle of physic from a druggist, or, if he can afford neither doctor nor medicine, declines to attend the nearest hospital as an out-patient, is no other than a mutton-head deserving neither of sympathy nor help. He is more than a fool; he is something uncommonly like a rogue. He is inflicting a grievous wrong not only upon himself—that perhaps is his own business and does not greatly matter—but upon his wife, his children, and practically everybody with whom he comes into contact. He may claim to be patient, and so he is, but his Patience is the Patience not of the hero but of the ass.

Well, that, that ass-like Patience under removable burthens, is the most marked characteristic of the English working classes. But why English? you may ask. Is it not also a quality of the workers all over the world? To some extent no doubt it is; but to nothing like the same extent. The foreign ass is occasionally restive; he rears, he kicks, he bites, and now and then makes things dangerous for his drivers. The English animal plods along serenely and never so much as lays back his ears or shows his teeth.

I have a lively recollection of once hearing an English workman taunt a German with the freedom of speech which is granted to Britons and denied to Teutons. "We," boasted the Briton, "would never consent to be muzzled. No one dares to muzzle us." "Muzzle you," replied the other. "No, I should think not. Who takes the trouble to muzzle sheep?"

The counter lacked politeness, perhaps, but at least it was not without point.

When one compares the condition of the English

working classes at the beginning of the nineteenth century with their condition at the beginning of the twentieth, one is compelled to admit that there has been a marked improvement. But when one studies the history of the century which has intervened one is no less compelled to recognize that uncommonly little of that improvement has been due to the activity or the enterprise of the working classes themselves. They enjoy more of the good things of life now than they did a hundred years ago, no doubt, but that is mainly because there are a good many more of the good things to go round.

Thanks to the invention of the steam-engine, and to the marvellous improvement in machinery, there has been an enormous, an almost incalculable increase in wealth and productivity, and of this increase a small part has found its way into the homes of the working classes. Some of the crumbs from the rich man's table have fallen to them. But it is very questionable indeed whether they get now a larger proportion of the total product than they got then.

To-day, after a whole century of incessant invention and ever-increasing productivity, there are still some twelve millions of them as low down as they can be without actually ceasing to exist at all; and many millions more who have no good reason to suppose that this time next year they will not be even as those twelve millions are to-day.

The crushing defeat of the political party which sought to impose a tax on foodstuff was owing chiefly to the rally of the working classes to the defence of free imports. And the motive of that rally was Fear. The working classes were frightened lest a few pence might be added to the weekly bread bill. They knew that those few pence would make all the difference between comparative comfort and positive misery. What must be the condition of a people to whom eightpence a week can make such a difference as that?

A hundred, and considerably less than a hundred years ago, the working classes might have pleaded with some justice that they were in the position of the man with an incurable disease. That there was nothing for them but to grin and bear it. They had no political power whatever, and even the right of combination was withheld from them. For the last thirty or forty years at any rate no such plea has been available. Both political power and the right of combination have been given to them.

Yes, mark, I say, *given* to them, not taken by them. They have never so far *taken* anything. The middle classes forced the political weapon from the hands of the land-owning aristocracy by threat of revolution. Their menace had something real behind it. They meant what they said. The land-owning aristocracy knew that and gave way. But the utmost the working classes have ever done was to pull down a few railings of Hyde Park.

Had the middle classes stiffened their lips and refused to yield an inch, there can be no doubt that the patient working classes would have simmered down and accepted their voteless lot. But for half a hundred mixed reasons the middle classes weakened and the workman was made, by a free gift, master of the situation—a master who either did not realize his mastery or who, realizing it, was too patient to put it to any practical use.

But even so up to 1870 he might have argued that although he had the power he had not education sufficient to enable him to exert it. To-day that last excuse is taken away from him. He still has not much education, I know, but he has enough and more than enough to bring home to him his own disease and to point out to him the remedy for it. No, it is neither lack of power nor of knowledge how to use it that is the matter with the English working classes. It is Patience, the Patience, as I said, of the ass.

Observe, it is with the Patience only of the ass that I charge him, not with the other intellectual and moral qualities of that useful beast. I have had some slight experience of donkeys, and I have noticed that they can show no little obstinacy upon occasion, and that they are by no means easily humbugged. If you want to discover the full potentiality of being humbugged which resides in the working classes all you have to do is to glance back over the various political programmes of the two political parties since the enfranchisement of the working classes, and compare the promise with the performance. Those programmes were framed and those promises made with the special design of catching the working class vote. They caught it every time. The snare was laid right in view of the bird, and the bird hopped into it unfailingly.

Not to tax your memory too shrewdly, I will invite you to look no farther back than the famous programme which was called the "Newcastle," somewhere about 1892, I think—wasn't it? That programme contained several proposals which, if adopted, would have made for the material advantage of the working classes. Understand though that that programme was a programme drawn up by middle-class men and not by working-class leaders. Still there it was, and the working classes jumped at it and returned the Liberal party to power on the strength of it. Well, my dear sir, what became of it? Where is it now?

A donkey, we are told, will run after a carrot dangled before its nose. But then it must be a real carrot, after all. A thing of pasteboard and paint is good enough to set the working classes on the trot.

But, you may tell me that though all I have been saying is true enough of the past, it is not true of the present; that the Patience of the working classes, though incredible, is not exhaustless, and that the general election of the present year proves it to be

exhausted at last. I think I see you pointing with pride to those thirty or so members of Parliament who follow the lead of Mr. Keir Hardie as a proof of the fact.

Now, really, if those thirty members and the hurraing their return evoked prove anything, they prove what history has already proved many a time before : how easily the working classes are pleased, and with what very small potatoes they are contented. If they ask for a whole loaf it is never in the least necessary to give them half a one. Just a dry crust will always stop their mouths.

How do you think the middle classes would have taken it if after the Reform Bill of '32 they had been able to send only thirty members to the House of Commons ? As a matter of fact, the Act which enfranchised the middle classes set them straightway in the political saddle. There they have been ever since. There they will remain until the working classes pull them out of it ; which means, if things go on as they are going on now that there they will remain for ever and ever.

Just think, I pray you, of the difference. The working classes were enfranchised, and pretty fully enfranchised, more than twenty-five years ago, and to-day they are able to send only thirty members out of six hundred and seventy to represent them in the House of Commons ! Permit me to remind you that the Universities alone send nine !

But you will tell me—no, stay, I don't think you will do that—but somebody else will tell you, and you being a workman will believe him if only he puts it neatly enough, that the working classes can be represented by a highly educated gentleman of wealth and position as well, or even better, than by a man of their own order. Yes, and so they might. There is no absolutely imperative reason why they should not be. But the question is, not what might be, but what is

and what has been. Have the working classes been adequately represented by the highly educated gentlemen of wealth and position, who have solicited and obtained their suffrages so far? If you are inclined to think so just run your eyes through the Statute Book for half an hour or so. Or, no, there is no need to take that trouble; just look around you, and compare the state of the districts where the working classes dwell with those inhabited by the highly educated gentlemen of wealth and position.

Further, ask one of these highly educated gentlemen whether he would feel that he and his were adequately represented by members of the working classes. You would know exactly how he felt about it by the way in which he would smile at your ingenuous question.

What happens, I put it to you, when there comes a big strike or a great labour dispute in the coal trade, say, or the shipping trade, or the cotton trade? You know well enough. Then the working classes find themselves fighting for daily bread against the very men, and the friends and relations of the very men, for whom they voted so gaily at the last election! Verily the situation is not without its humour, is it?

They say that eels like being skinned alive. I have always felt it unfair to the eels, that saying, because the eels, you know, can't help themselves. They never get a chance of expressing their opinions on the operation. If they had a voice and a vote in the matter, and invariably spoke up and voted for the fishermen and the cooks, then one could feel more certain of their preference.

But it is almost clear to me that the working classes, or at any rate the great mass of them, do like the conditions in which they find themselves and in which their children's children will find themselves so long as that ass-like Patience of theirs is their most marked characteristic. They like the long hours, the mean rewards, the ever-present uncertainty, the comfortable

assurance that if they live long enough they will end their days in the workhouse or the infirmary. They like these conditions ; we may feel sure of that in their case, because they have a voice and a vote in the matter, and they use both to shout and vote for the men whose interest it is to maintain the conditions. Better still, oh, much better, do they like, do they positively love, the flapdoodle which these same men so liberally serve out to them.

Flapdoodle is cheap, you know ; it costs practically nothing, and that is why there is always so much of it to be had for the asking.

1906.

## VII

### TO THE EMPEROR OF JAPAN

SIRE,—It will doubtless cause your Majesty some surprise—surprise which your Oriental training and sense of self-dignity will prevent your manifesting by so much as the flicker of an eyelash—to be addressed thus, as it were without ceremony, by one in the humble position of a journalist. Therefore I make bold at the outset to advise your Majesty that in England the journalist considers himself, and he hopes, is considered by his public, to be on terms of the easiest familiarity with Principalities and Powers. Nothing is sacred to a journalist—in England. He will reprimand an archbishop as unhesitatingly as he will criticize a constable. He will condemn a Cabinet as ruthlessly as he will castigate a County Council. Two considerations only restrain his inveterate irreverence, a wholesome fear of offending a certain elusive but most masterful entity which he calls “the man in the street,” and a very genuine respect for the law of libel. Therefore I would have your Majesty to understand that in thus approaching you directly and not through the medium of your Majesty’s Ministers (of whose names, titles, and addresses I regret to say I am ignorant) I am in no way outraging the custom or violating the etiquette of English journalism.

Let it be understood, let it be taken for granted, I

beseech you, that I bend my bones to the fullest extent of their elasticity ; that I bow again and again until my back aches fit to break, as we say in England ; that I go through every other possible contortion demanded by the honourable customs of your Majesty's august Court.

My object in addressing you is one which your Majesty will at least appreciate at its right value, for it is in the fullest sense of the word patriotic. I desire to prevent, by anticipation, a misunderstanding on your Majesty's part which might easily give rise to an international complication. . . . But I fear I am doing myself less than justice in trying, as I have been trying in the last three paragraphs, to compel myself to write in the stilted, costive and ridiculous phraseology of Addresses to the Throne. It is the custom of my fellow-countrymen always to speak to a monarch as though he were a particularly pompous uncle, and it is a custom which I dislike extremely. Therefore with your Majesty's kind permission, which I make bold to take as given, I will continue this letter in the style which comes natural to me, for, truth to tell, I cannot keep up the other sort a minute longer.

When I read in my morning paper, your Majesty, that our gracious Sovereign was about to send a Royal Prince to you to present you with the Order of the Garter it occurred to me that unless that Royal Prince knew his business (and we have no reason whatever to suppose he does) you might take that present more as a slight and an offence than as a compliment and an honour.

I am not acquainted (it is my misfortune, not my fault) with the more intimate details of a Japanese lady's toilette, and it seems to me extremely probable that your Majesty may not even know, may not so much as apprehend, what the curious device of this Order which our King seeks to bestow upon you, may signify. A star, of course, you would appreciate, for

you have seen stars, a cross you would more or less understand, for you have heard of crosses—but a garter!

“A star,” I think I hear you saying, “stands for hope; a cross for self-sacrifice; but what in the name of all my royal ancestors, is the meaning of a garter?”

Well, a garter, your Majesty, is an article of feminine apparel, seldom seen, except in shop windows, and rarely or never talked of. All that is respectable in English society is content to know that it is there, in its proper place. To mention it were indiscreet, to discover it were positively indecorous.

There are many mysteries connected with the garter, mysteries so recondite that I feel it almost hopeless to make them even partially clear, still more adequately to explain them, to one who is unfamiliar with the curious inconsistencies and contradictions of English thought and manners. For instance, a Prime Minister may, and does, in full Court, so wear his garter that every eye may see and every heart grow envious. Were the Prime Minister's wife, daughter, female cousin, or aunt to do precisely the same thing, she would be instantly dismissed from the Royal presence (at least, so we hope and believe) and cut by all her women acquaintances. When I say “cut,” your Majesty, I do not mean physically injured by a lethal weapon. The “cut” in England is inflicted by something sharper than any sword.

Then again, a garter, the garter, may be given by the Sovereign to the highest nobleman or (I think) noblewoman in the land; but were a bank clerk to present his young woman with a pair of them the girl's father would call on him next morning with a horse-whip.

Her Majesty the Queen of England is at present the only woman in the realm on whom the Order has been conferred. She is our only Lady of the Garter. But, such is our quaint custom, when her Majesty does

wear it she wears it round her royal neck—the very last place, one would imagine, where a garter can be of the slightest use. Were any other lady of her Court to appear in public with her garter round her neck or anywhere else where it was visible she would (in charity) be held to be out of her mind.

The very origin of the Order with which your Majesty is to be presently honoured is enwrapped in an atmosphere of something uncommonly like Court scandal. Upon a State occasion many years ago, at the Court of one of our King's royal predecessors, a great Court lady incontinently dropped her garter on the floor . . . there for all to see! How she came to be so careless in tying it (elastic was not in vogue in those days) history telleth not, and whether it was by design or accident we are not told. But anyhow, so it was; and, I regret to have to tell your Majesty, the courtiers present began to cough and the ladies to titter; for the smart set was as amused by "that sort of thing" in those historic times as it is to-day. Then the King—his name, by the way, was Edward, and he was as adroit in gallantry as he was skilful in statesmanship—stooped, picked that garter up, and, with a look on his face that meant "let me just catch any of you making jokes about this, that's all!" let fall the sententious observation, "Evil be to him who evil thinks." Then, in order to finish off the affair artistically, and to leave the Mrs. Grundy of the period without a word to say for herself, he instituted the Most Noble Order of the Garter. That, as the reporters remarked at the time, closed the incident. But there is a strange perfume of femininity about the whole thing, isn't there?

And now to come to the point, at which I frankly admit I have been some time arriving.

This little piece of blue ribbon that our Sovereign is sending to you across the sad seas! There is more in it, let me assure you, than meets the eye. By that I do not mean a joke or an innuendo, I mean just this,

that the garter is something more than an Order, it is a symbol. That small but necessary bit of woman's wear to which we pay so much honour over here that to receive it from the King's hands means more, ever so much more, than to receive a peerage, stands for us as an emblem of chivalry, it symbolizes the position of woman in England. Do you see, your Majesty? We think so highly of woman over here that we take the least obvious if not the least important article of her apparel and adorn with it the necks and the legs of our greatest statesmen and the necks and legs of such foreign princes as we most delight to honour. Woman in England is so superior a being—a wife, let me remind you, is always called a man's "better half" over here—that we take the very ribbon by which she keeps up her stockings and prevents their wrinkling around her ankles, as our blazon and ensign of nobility. Can, I put it to you, adoration of a human creature go very much farther than that?

I am the more anxious that you should get that significant fact firmly fixed in your royal head because I have a fear that some of your emissaries who have studied our social and political customs over here may have reported certain things to you which, regarded superficially, might convey to you an entirely contrary opinion.

You may have heard, for instance, that though we allow a woman to sit upon our Throne we do not permit one of her sex to be called into her counsels. Our women are expected, and indeed compelled, to obey the laws, but they are not suffered to assist in making them. We invite them, with an unrefusable invitation, to pay the taxes; but we do not suffer them to have a say in the levying of them. That may strike you as being just a trifle incompatible with the honour we pay to woman's garter, but in point of fact it is not only consistent with it, it is inseparable from it. We consider the business of law making and of

tax levying a dirtyish business, fit only for the coarser nature of men. We feel that woman's finer spirit would be sullied by the mere contact with it. For instance, you cannot take an active part in English politics without stigmatizing your political opponents with unseemly epithets. You cannot be a good Liberal, let us say, without using the language of opprobrium concerning the Unionists, or a good Conservative without speaking slightly of the Liberals ; or a good Socialist without roundly abusing both parties. The pursuit of politics involves a good deal of what we call "Billingsgate" ; and it would grieve us, we simply could not bear, to hear our women (whose very garters we reverence) resorting to such rude and rough expedients as these. We feel that they would be vulgarized, yes, even "unsexed." We frequently tell them that when, as sometimes happens, they ask for what they absurdly call their "rights." It does not seem to impress them much, but still . . . !

Then, again, there are certain of the learned and well remunerated professions from which our women are excluded—the legal, for example. But that is not because our legal gentleman are fearful of woman's competition, but rather because they are jealous of her honour. They recognize that lawyers, especially advocates, are compelled by the exigencies of their "cases" occasionally to suppress the truth, aye, even sometimes to suggest the false. And they feel that women could do neither of those things successfully, at any rate not without injury to their more delicate, more truthful natures. Our lawyers' experiences of their own wives and daughters and sweet-hearts tell them that in private life woman never does suppress the true or suggest the false. Further, we feel that so irresistible are woman's attractions, so winsome her ways, so seductive and bewildering the very atmosphere she creates around her, that were a woman, a pretty woman (and one cannot

ensure, you know, that all women lawyers should be ugly), to appear in court as the counsel for the most obviously guilty prisoner the jury would promptly acquit the criminal and then wait outside on the chance of inviting the lady to luncheon at the Savoy. . . . The Savoy is a hotel in the near neighbourhood of our Law Courts.

We do admit our women (I trust your informants have told you that) to be doctors, but although we permit it we do not like it, we do our best to discourage it. For doctors, you see, have to do things to the human body which we like not our women to see done. But we allow, we gladly allow, we encourage them to be nurses and to be present at the operations the doctors perform. If you ask me how I reconcile those two customs, I must respectfully request your Majesty not to be so beastly inquisitive; and I must remind you that consistency is the bugbear of little minds.

But we do not allow our young women in schools to learn physiology, for we regard it as indelicate, almost indecent, that a young woman, particularly that species of young woman that we call a young lady, should know more of her own body than her own looking-glass can tell her. I feel sure that your Majesty's Oriental nature will approve of that.

Speaking broadly, we still hold fast to the Eastern view that woman's place is her home, that her duties are to her husband and to her children, and that if she do not happen to have a husband (and if she have children without one woe betide her, your Majesty, but such a thing is unthinkable) then to somebody else's children in the capacity of governess or nurse. If you have heard by chance that, in spite of the deeply-rooted conviction of ours as to woman's sphere (we always call it woman's sphere) being purely domestic, many hundreds of thousands of women in England are working outside that sphere, working in factories and fields, for their livings, working in garrets and

cellars for a pittance that will not provide a living, or anything like a living, that pregnant women and women within a few days of their childbearing are compelled to daily labour, the severity of which inflicts upon them and their offspring lifelong injury, that in the streets of all our great cities thousands of women are nightly offering their bodies for sale ; and if you demand of me how all this agrees with what I have already assured you is the honour in which we hold woman (and her garter)—well, your Majesty, I must reply—that—that—in short all these things come about through the—I am afraid you'll never understand—but through the working of certain economic forces, certain Natural Laws, that are beyond the control of—but I trespass too long on your Majesty's patience. It would require too much time and thought and ink to reply satisfactorily to your Majesty's confoundedly inconvenient questions. And so I subscribe myself your Majesty's most humble and obedient servant.

1905.

## VIII

### TO PRINCE FUSHIMI

YOUR IMPERIAL HIGHNESS,—I would that I might have addressed you in prettier and more picturesque terms. In point of fact I did hesitate for some time before deciding. Nephew of the Rising Sun and Full Moon and Lord Paramount of the Blossoming Cherry Tree struck me as being at once a more adequate and a more poetic beginning, but I remembered that had I begun thus it might have occurred to some British official or other, somebody with an office in St. James's Palace Yard, that in adopting so florid a mode of address I was trying to poke mild fun at your Highness's country and customs. In England just now we are forbidden to joke concerning things Japanese, and I did not want to get the *Sunday Chronicle* into trouble with officialdom. It has not yet dawned upon British officialdom that an Oriental people may just possibly have a sense of humour, at least equal to its own.

Although your Highness's honourable feet have been set upon our soil for only some four-and-twenty hours, you will already have discovered that we have among us, or let me say more correctly above us, one official who has in a marked degree a sense of the appropriate. I refer to our gracious King, who has just conferred upon your Highness the most Honourable Order of the Bath! How essentially right our King always is!—to confer the Order of the

Bath upon the representative of the cleanest people in the world ! Could anything be more deliciously apt ?

When, some years ago—I think it must have been after your Highness's troops had won a battle and so had proved that Japan was a civilized Power—his Majesty presented your august master with the Order of the Garter, I confess I had some qualms and dubieties as to how your august master would take it. There is something feminine, something frivolous, something almost frilly, about a garter, it seemed to me, and I thought it might have so seemed to him. And so I wrote to him a letter pointing out and explaining that the Garter was far from being a symbol of impropriety, or even of giddiness ; that, on the contrary, among us it stood for chivalry and for all we most respect and admire in woman. I may mention, by the way, that your august master has so far not acknowledged that letter.

But the Order of the Bath—that is a different matter. The bath is a utensil much venerated in England. Among the upper and middle classes it has become somewhat of a superstition. It has taken the place of family prayers. Most young men of those classes would feel deepest shame to themselves if they did not take it in the morning, and take it cold. It is an inevitable and an essential ceremonial in the worship of physical culture, about the only worship in which the young men of our upper and middle classes take part, just now. It is said that our young women, too . . . but I beg your Highness's pardon, it is not decorous in England to speak of or even to think of young women in connexion with anything so intimate as bathing. One must control one's thoughts.

We do not like the bath exactly, your Highness. In winter mornings we find it inconvenient and uncomfortable, but just because it is so extraordinarily unpleasant we jump into it, for we cannot get over the idea, so deeply rooted in the English mind, that that

which is uncomfortable must needs be good for us. If your Highness stays long enough with us you will infallibly discover that in England the moral is almost synonymous with the disagreeable. To be happy is to be suspect.

There are some queer things about the Order of the Bath, your Highness, some inexplicable things. To begin with, it was instituted somewhere about the year 1400, when it is well known nobody washed ; and it was revived by one of our Kings, the First George, I think it was, who, if report speak true, was by no means the cleanest of our monarchs. But incongruities of this sort are not rare in England. Then there is the motto attached to the jewel of the Order : *Tria juncta in uno*, "Three joined in one." The appropriateness of that motto to a bath your Highness will find it difficult to discover, and I as difficult to explain. If it means three persons joined in one bath, then it is downright libellous of English manners. I assure your Highness we never do anything like that. Here we go to our bathroom alone and carefully lock the door.

I make no doubt that the real object of your Highness's visit is to prosecute personal investigations as to what your country has to gain by its alliance with mine, and to learn at the same time what among us it would be well for your Government to follow and what to avoid. If that be so may I beg you not to look too closely at our army. And yet on the other hand I feel rather strongly that if you do not look at it closely, if you do not look at it through a tolerably powerful magnifying glass, you will be unable to see it at all. It is scarcely visible at a distance and it gets smaller every day.

Consult Mr. Haldane about our army, your Highness, and take upon faith everything he tells you. He will tell you that our army is in a state of "transition." If you had come here any time during the last genera-

tion the Minister of War of the period would have told you exactly the same thing. We are thinking about our army, your Highness, we are trying really hard to make up our minds what we want an army for, and whether we want an army at all. If you should pay a visit to our War Office—and I hope you will, it will amuse and interest you, for it is by far the finest museum of antiquities we possess—and consult the permanent officials, you will find that they are not thinking about the army at all; that what they are thinking about is the sort of caps the army shall wear when, and if by chance, we get one, and whether our Volunteers, of whom we have a few still left, shall be supplied with the guns of last century or of the century before that.

We are thinking about reforming our War Office, your Highness. We began to think about that five years ago, and the exhausting, if infertile, process still continues.

I would not, if I were you—pardon the impious suggestion, it is an English colloquialism—and desired to keep a clear brain, inquire too curiously into our religion. It has before now puzzled investigators as shrewd as your Highness. We have a fine assortment—forgive the commercial ring of the phrase, but we are a nation of shopkeepers—of religions, but out of them all it is scarcely possible to abstract anything definite or satisfying.

I am quite unable to recommend to you a sample by which you may judge the rest. However, you will find the oldest brand at the Pro-Cathedral in Westminster and the very latest thing of all in the City Temple on Holborn Viaduct. Perhaps it might be well to ask the leaders of what is called “religious thought” in England to form a small committee and draw up for your Highness’s study a brief creed which shall be the greatest common measure of their agreement. I suggest that you should invite the Arch-

bishop of Canterbury, Mr. Bernard Shaw, Father Vaughan, Dr. Clifford, the Rev. Stuart Headlam, Mr. R. J. Campbell, and Professor Oliver Lodge. When you have discovered what single article of faith all these gentlemen have in common you will know, well, something that none of us has been able to find out.

We should all like you to carry away with you favourable opinions of the state of dramatic art in England. Therefore I beseech you do not go to the theatres. A few weeks ago I should not have given you the same advice, because then you might have happened upon a play called *The Mikado*, a bright, witty, amusing, melodious, topsy-turvy little play that would have pleased you hugely. But Somebody, nobody knows who, though the queerest things are hinted, has thought well to signalize your arrival amongst us by forbidding the performance of the only play that might possibly have entertained you.

At any other time I should have recommended you if you were in search of an hour's relaxation to visit a music-hall. But just now our music-halls are under a cloud, or, to be more accurate, are in a whirlpool of controversy in which I would not for the world have a distinguished and friendly sojourner involved. If you were to visit a music-hall just now you might possibly see an unclothed young woman, painted white and posing as a statue.

Now we are not quite sure yet whether such a spectacle is moral. We are thinking about that ; or, rather, we are waiting patiently while other people think about it. In England questions of morality are not settled by the people themselves ; they are settled for the people by bishops, mayors of provincial towns (such ultra-moral towns as Manchester and Glasgow, for example), members of watch committees, and county councillors. But the serious point is this : If you were to see that unclothed young woman, painted

white and posing (for fifteen seconds) as a statue, and were rather to like the look of her, and to smile approval and clap your Imperial hands, why, then you might be voted an immoral foreigner, and there would be a prompt end of the Japanese Alliance. Coming as you do from a country where young women in complete nudity walk down their gardens to take their baths and naïvely bid good morning to the casual passer-by, and where men and women bathe together in the public baths, you will naturally find it hard to believe that in England the undraped human form is held an indecent and a shocking thing. But it is so, I assure you. Consult your Royal host on this matter. He knows.

Talking of morality, by the way, if you would retain any sort of idea of ours, do not go out into the streets of London or of any other of our cities at night. You might so easily misunderstand. Obviously I cannot speak with much plainness upon this matter—plain speech is not the English way.

But the fact of the matter, briefly, is this. Japanese and English methods are entirely different. In Japan if an evil exist your Government recognizes its existence, regulates it, makes the best of a bad job of it. In England we have a theory that as long as a thing is not recognized it does not really and truly exist at all, it only appears to exist, and anyhow, it is nobody's business. And so we do not recognize it nor regulate it, nor make the best of it. We suffer it to go on its own foul way. You will never be able to understand this theory of ours, your Highness; nobody but an Englishman could understand it. Therefore do not try to understand, and do not go into our streets at night.

I am not sure that it would not be better on the whole for you to remain in York House for the greater part of your stay, to go abroad only in a carriage, and to accept as Gospel what is told you. If you

were to look about you would see such strange things. Supposing you were told to go down to our manufacturing districts, for instance, the districts where England's industrial supremacy (of which you must have heard tell) is built up and maintained—and were to see the people at work, to follow them to their homes and see where they slept, and what they ate, and how they spent their leisure time ; to go to some of our schools and see the workpeople's children come in the morning, to examine their boots, and to ask them what they had for breakfast, and what they expected to have for dinner ! Well, I am afraid you might return to your native land harbouring some doubts as to whether industrial supremacy was so very well worth having after all, and whether it was quite worth your country's while to emulate, and to imitate, as she is doing, the industrial methods of her ally. And that, your Highness, would never do ; because we hope to have a good customer in Japan. We hope to be drawn closer to Japan by the peaceful bonds of commerce. You know the way we talk.

1907.

## IX

### TO A LADY

MY DEAR JULIA,—I always boggle an instant or so at your name when I write to you. It does not exactly fit you somehow. Julia labels a pretty woman well enough if she be dark and her eyes be violet, but it does not quite imply a wise one, no matter how otherwise delightful she may be. Had your parents known how you were going to develop they would have called you Hypatia or Zenobia, or even Jane. Jane is not necessarily small, and there is no earthly reason why she should not be extremely intelligent. However !

You ask me to explain and defend and expatiate upon that apparent *obiter dictum* of mine delivered just at the moment when that most opportune and much desired tea arrived, and with it those dear, nice people who never talk for two seconds or sentenees on end about anything that matters. How restful such people are at times, aren't they ?—and how devastating at others !

What I said was, I seem to remember, that there are many more men who love their wives—love them in the true sense of the term, the sense we understand well enough, but cannot minutely define—than there are women who in that same sense love their husbands. That was it, wasn't it ?

Well, of course, it is a statement incapable of proof,

of mathematical demonstration. It cannot obviously be confirmed by statistics. But, then, few things that are worth proving can. You cannot in that way prove the case for Free Trade, for instance, or for its opposing policy. Both sides tell you you can, but they both show themselves to be wrong by both failing to do it.

You might, of course, make a list of the names of all your married friends and acquaintances and tick off on each side respectively, as it were. But that process, though it might be more or less satisfactory to yourself, would not convince anybody else. It would not convince me, for one, though I dearly wish you would do it. I should so much like to see how you categorized yourself and Arthur. I wonder if he would like it as much.

But even then you would have to correct your figures. Crude statistics, even of that meagre kind, would not do at all. You would have to make time allowances, so to speak. In the first year of their married life Jill might love Jack more than Jack loved her—though it is not in the least likely—but how about the fifth year, and all the years right away on? And then, again, you can't measure love. You can't get a measure of capacity either big enough and deep enough or small and shallow enough. You can't judge of it by its external expressions. In other words, you can't tell how much people love each other, or who loves whom, by their conduct in public, or even in private.

No; all you can have on this question, no matter how observant you may be and no matter how competent a judge of human character, is a general impression. But a general impression, though vague and misty about the outlines, may be an uncommonly strong impression. It may easily amount to a conviction—an ineradicable, an inexpugnable, an invincible conviction.

There! There are three nice adjectives all beginning with "in." I like that sort, don't you? Well, it is my conviction, with those three adjectives attached, that there are more men who love their wives than there are wives who love their husbands. And it is yours, too. You almost admitted as much. Now, if you can show that such and such a thing must be, or even if you can show that there are a thousand reasons why it should, for one why it shouldn't be, then I really do think, even in the absence of what is called positive proof, you may pretty safely assume that it is. Anyhow, it is upon such defective proofs that we act in all the big affairs of life. Odds of a thousand to one *on* are good enough for any of us.

I confess that to me nothing is more natural, more obvious, more inevitable than that this state of things, which I say does exist, should exist. For the life of me I cannot see how it could be otherwise. No blame attaches to either sex in the matter. It is not a case for blame or approval, or for an oral judgment of any kind. It is just a necessary fact of our civilization. I am not at all sure that it was not almost as true of all other past and possible-present social conditions, but I am quite sure that it is true of ours.

To begin with, most men marry for love. That sounds a sentimental sort of thing to say just now when the atmosphere is positively acrid with cynical remarks about marriage. But come to think of it, what else have most men to marry for? What do they get by it, but the satisfaction of that instinct, that impulse, which we call love. Mind, I do not mean raw passion. That can always be satisfied without anything so drastic and so irrevocable, and so generally bothersome, as marriage.

No, emphatically, it is love, the real old tender thing of the romanticists; the thing that transforms, that recreates, that sets men to the doing of heroic

and splendid follies, the vital flame that many waters cannot quench. There, now, what do you think of that from a man who doesn't often let himself go on these subjects?

Oh; of course, some men marry for money, some for ambition, some, a precious few, for the sake of the possible children; some for that delusive state which is called domestic comfort (though how they hope to get it if they marry a woman they do not love, and who does not love them, it is a little puzzling to see); and some for all sorts of reasons, which we may sum up under the general head of "sundry." But, really, all these lumped together do not count in the final estimate. They are what statisticians call "negligible."

Do you notice how, in all this correspondence and chatter that is going on about the fall in the marriage rate—I think you said you did glance at it now and again—the charge brought (by women especially) against bachelors is mostly selfishness? Now then, what is the implication involved in that charge?

I really feel almost ashamed to point it out to a woman of your perceptiveness. Of course it is, it must be, that men in marrying do make a personal and material sacrifice; that they surrender something that pertains to the "self." If it be selfish not to marry and, as some one has said, to spend the larger part of your income on maintaining another fellow's daughter, then must it be unselfish to marry. But why unselfish unless there's a real sacrifice of something?

And now, my dear Julia, what is it that makes us, men or women, unselfish? What is it that makes us self-forgetful? It is love, and nothing in this vast muddle, which we call a universe, but love, and the good old sort at that.

Of course you may reply that the accusation of selfishness against the obstinately celibate man is a false, or a silly, or an irrelevant one, and to some extent I

should agree with you. Moreover, you may say that a man who marries, even who marries for love, inasmuch as he seeks to obtain something that he wants more than he wants other things, is as selfish as the man who remains unwed.

There I should not quite agree with you. To call each of these two opposite actions by the one term of "selfish" is, it seems to me, to play with words and thus to debase the moral currency, as George Eliot has it. The man who seeks another's happiness as well as his own, who finds his own in that other's, may be in some sort selfish, but it is a larger selfishness, so much larger as not to be selfishness at all.

But the point is that it is *women* for the most part who accuse the bachelor of selfishness, not quite knowing what they do when they do it, not seeing how they give themselves and their sex away.

They don't think before they accuse; they just accuse upon intuition, womanly intuition. Womanly intuition for ever, Julia! How often it goes slap dash straight to the very heart of the truth! Oh, hang it, yes, and to the hearts of all of us, too, of course.

Now for the other side. The great majority of women do not marry for love. Another *obiter dictum*, you, no, not you, but some people might say, thrown off as light-heartedly and light-headedly as the first. But just look well around you and think for a minute or two. Is it not true that most of the married girls you have known have married, not for love, but for the sake of "a suitable marriage"? Love may have supplied a motive to the desperate deed, too. I don't deny that it did in many cases, but was it the principal motive?

Oh, I don't say for a moment that it is the women's faults. It is idle to talk of faults in this connexion. In numberless cases the parents and friends are primarily responsible. Think how often a man is spoken of in a family circle as being a likely suitor for

Dolly, before the girl has even set eyes on him ! Think how carefully and how cleverly elder daughters are "got off," as the beastly saying goes, before the younger. Now, what is involved in getting an elder daughter "off" ? All sorts of things, of course, but not the girl's love for the man.

Let us imagine a case—we shall not need to exert our imaginations over much. A young, or, for the matter of that, an oldish man, of reputable character and delectable income, comes to London from the country or to the country from London, and he is introduced into a family of, say, three or four marriageable daughters. Nice girls, you know, but without a penny, or the prospect of one. All the money that is going at all loose is wanted to educate the younger children or to start the sons in life. Now, then, is it not the fact, as people say when they question me upon a platform, is it not the fact that the chances are—I won't say more than that—but that the chances are that the eligible man might have his pick—pardon the expression drawn from another market—of those three or four eligible girls ?

Oh, you know it is, and what is the use of pretending ? Now, if that be so, he will love the girl he chooses, but what is the likelihood of her loving him ? Of course, if that happy coincidence should come off nothing could be more agreeable to all parties concerned ; but what are the chances of it ? If she be a really nice girl, and I am assuming that she is, she will not accept him unless she "likes" him, unless she regards him with respect and esteem. But to accept him she will not need to love him. No, no, no—not love, I insist.

The causes of this difference between the sexes in the matter of love and marriage are mostly economic. Marriage is still woman's profession, and her profession, for our time, at any rate, for yours even as well as mine, it is likely to remain. One needs not to

love a profession or any one in it to adopt it. Why am I a writer? Heaven alone knows. Why is Arthur a barrister? He told me himself only the other day that he didn't know. But although the reasons for which so many women marry without love are mainly economic, they are by no means entirely so. Here, again, don't let's pretend.

As things are, marriage does offer to women other advantages than the merely financial—advantages which it does not confer upon men. There *is* something in the position of a married woman as compared with that of her unmarried sister, something more than the mere trifling social precedence it gives her. She feels more dignified, you know, more important. Often enough she isn't, but she feels she is, poor dear thing. Then, besides, there are natural instincts which clamour for gratification . . . but we need not go into that. It is unnecessary to talk about what nobody talks about, but what everybody knows. . . .

Lastly—and here I shall have you against me as well as the rest of your sex—(I am sorry to have you against me, but I don't care a rap for the rest of your sex, as you know, Julia)—lastly, I do believe that there are fundamental differences between men and women—differences of which I have never seen anything like a satisfactory explanation. They just are. I think women find it easier to “settle down” in marriage with a partner they don't love than men do.

You may remember I said that I believed the modern civilized man would kill himself rather than submit to slavery. I am not at all sure the modern civilized woman would; when once the slavery was seen to be hopeless, I mean. It is wonderful how women revolt; but it is much more wonderful how they submit . . . to certain things. No doubt I might look learned and say that heredity is at the bottom of it; that it is because for countless ages in

the dim past women were compelled to be wives to men who captured them, or who bought them, men they did not love.

But I don't believe it's that. No, it goes deeper even than heredity, if that be possible. But, anyhow, there it is, and you shan't have the last word this time.

1910.

## X

### TO MISS MARIE CORELLI

MADAM,—I trust you will believe me when, in all sincerity, I declare that I write this with hopes but of the faintest that it will ever reach your eyes ; that anything written by a person so obscure as I could penetrate the seclusion in which you have enshrouded yourself, and which has been, and is, one of the most potent factors in the advertisement of your personality.

Should, however, the fate of my letter be happier than I have any right to anticipate, you will, I am sure, understand and appreciate the motives which have prompted me to send it forth, all unknowing whether or not it will ever reach its goal. You, who have so often informed the world that you are an artist, must needs have a true apprehension of the artistic temperament and must needs know, therefore, that he who is cursed or blessed with such temperament creates because he must, and is heedless of what becomes of his creations. You, I venture to assert, would be the first to declare that every one of your own works, many and voluminous though they are, would have been written even had you known that not one of them would ever have attained to the dignity of publication or received the tribute of popularity.

It flashed upon me some little time ago, Madam,

and it smote me with extreme amazement, that in all the rather large circle of my acquaintance I did not know one single individual who read the works of Miss Marie Corelli ! That I was the solitary exception in my own social set. That, when you come to consider it thoughtfully, is a rather astonishing fact ; for, if I may, without impertinence, mention so apparently unimportant a personal detail, the set in which I move is for the most part of men and women who earn their daily bread by the sweat of their brains. They are novelists, essayists, leader writers, critics, journalists, and their conversation frequently (much too frequently to be altogether pleasant) turns upon literary topics. And yet there remains the remarkable fact that none of them read the works of Miss Marie Corelli !

They talk about you, though ; your name is often on their lips. They speak of you with envy, if not with admiration. Yet, stay, I am not sure that I ought quite to say “ not with admiration,” for they make it manifest that they do admire your talents, though the talents of yours that they do admire are not those which are obvious in the books you write. The questions one most constantly hears asked by literary persons, and even by those persons who, though not literary, take an intelligent interest in literature, are : “ *Who* reads Marie Corelli ? ” and “ What is the secret of Marie Corelli’s success ? ” They ask each other these questions, let me say, as poor little struggling City men might ask each other similar questions about the House of Rothschild. You, Madam, are the Rothschild of modern literature.

Well, for some little time now I have been turning the possible answers to these questions over in my mind, and have been employing a considerable amount of my spare time and thought in the endeavour to discover the truth. I think at last I have discovered it, and the object of this letter is to acquaint you,

and possibly some others, with the nature of my discovery.

To begin with, No. 1, "*Who reads Marie Corelli?*" I have pursued my investigations diligently; I have gone to and fro on the face of the earth a very note of interrogation in the flesh. I have sought information in railway carriages, in clubs of high and low degree, by the domestic hearth, on the sea's marge itself, where one sees ladies reading novels in the full blaze of the sun, and shudders for their eyesight; and I have inquired searchingly of the librarians and other officials of public and subscription libraries.

I have discovered (I admit to my great astonishment) that you are read by all classes. No, that is not quite true; the reading members of the working classes do not read you. They have little time, and I fancy a good natural taste, and when they read fiction at all, they read what the librarians call "*Standard*" fiction—the works, that is, of such writers as Dickens, Thackeray, Scott, and, to some extent, George Eliot. But the others! I have found colonels in the army absorbed in "*The Sorrows of Satan*," and country clergymen, dissenting ministers of every theological shade, serious clerks, superior housemaids, and a vast number of middle-class old ladies, who tell me that what they like about you is your "*high moral tone*," pertinaciously studying your works. Aunts, I notice, have a way of presenting your novels to their nieces. You have an immense vogue in the suburbs and the provinces, in homes where a servant is kept, and where the wife and grown-up daughters are thus enabled to devote a certain amount of leisure to literary relaxation and the improvement of the mind.

But, and this is a somewhat curious and interesting fact to which I would draw your attention, though you are read by all or nearly all classes, your readers belong all to one type. Class distinctions are apt to be vague and indefinite; type distinctions are

extraordinarily well marked. Let me try to put as clearly as I can just what I mean by that.

The wife of a fairly well-to-do professional man is, to all outward appearance, widely different from her domestic servants. She dresses more expensively, she has better manners, she speaks another tongue, but on close examination the soul of her may turn out to be indistinguishable from the soul of a kitchen-maid. The critical faculty of a colonel of the Guards may be on the same level as that of his orderly. So you see, these four persons, though they might differ widely on any number of other points, might be at one in their admiration of Marie Corelli. In point of fact, they very often are.

Readers of your works, I further find, are readers of very little else in the way of modern fiction. They find George Meredith too difficult, Thomas Hardy too pessimistic, Mr. H. G. Wells too scientific, John Oliver Hobbes too frivolous, Mr. George Moore too immoral, and so on, and so on. And this brings me to the answer to that other question—What is the secret of your success?

This class, or rather, this type, of which I have just been writing, exists in all countries (which accounts for your vast European, American, and Colonial sales), but it is larger in England than in any other. It is the type to which its admirers apply the epithet "solid," and its foes the epithet "stodgy." It looks with grave suspicion upon anything that smacks of the humorous. It dislikes and distrusts humour and cannot rid itself of the notion that smartness is closely akin to sculduggery. It takes or is pleased to think it takes, life seriously. In point of fact it is not serious; it is only solemn, a very different thing. It never uses its own eyes or its own ears, and so it loves to believe that it lives in a world in which vice is always punished, virtue always rewarded. What it really prefers in fiction is virtue

sorely persecuted, but emerging triumphant in the last chapter or the last but one. It has no definite or dogmatic faith, but it has what it calls "religious principles." Of course they are not principles at all, they are not even convictions; they are at best either loosely-held opinions or deeply-rooted prejudices. In its thinking upon such really serious matters as religion and morality, it is, if you will pardon the slanginess of the term, essentially "sloppy." It has lost, if it ever possessed, the Creed of Christendom, and has neither the courage nor the brains to accept the creed of science. In your remarkable work, "The Mighty Atom," it found its religious views reflected as though in a polished mirror.

Paradoxical as it may seem, this suet-pudding type of mind is in the highest degree sentimental. It constantly mistakes cheap sentimentality for profound pathos; just as with it fustian serves for fine writing. True pathos leaves it untouched; an onion would more readily provoke it to tears.

Be the individuals of the type rich or poor, they are never, in the true sense of the word, cultivated. They know little or nothing of art, and what little they do know they dislike extremely. They think art wickedness and artists immoral people, who make love to their neighbours' wives. They fear lest impropriety of some sort be always lurking behind a well-turned phrase. An epigram is to them a sort of blasphemy. They like their fiction in solid, sweet chunks. A novel is something that ought to last them for at least a week.

Lacking observation they know naught of life, and they demand from their fiction neither precision nor subtlety of characterization. They are imperceptive of fine shades, of delicate tones and values. For them a man is either "good" or "bad"; a woman either as chaste as ice or as vicious as Messalina. That strange blend of good and evil, of high heroism and

grovelling meanness, which makes up human nature, is to them the offensive product of an insanitary imagination.

Then they dearly love the obvious, these people. Unaccustomed to use their brains upon any matters save those of their daily business, they hate extremely to have to consider, for even so long as half a dozen seconds, what may or may not be an author's meaning. In poetry they prefer Longfellow to Browning, in painting Landseer to Whistler, in drama Henry Arthur Jones to George Bernard Shaw, and in fiction, naturally, Marie Corelli to George Meredith.

Not being beyond commercial considerations, too, they like lots for their money, as they themselves would put it. They are reluctant to pay 6s. at a bookstall or 4s. 6d. at a shop that allows the 3d. discount, for an afternoon's or an evening's entertainment. They prefer a prosy hour to a momentary thrill.

They are amorous of the didactic. Amusement for amusement's sake, or even intellectual activity for its own sake, are to them suspect. They like to feel that they are learning something from a book, it being the business of a book rather to teach than to entertain. They like, as they say, to rise from a book "feeling better." Of course, they mean feeling sleepier.

Now, Madam, this great, powerful, and multitudinous type of your fellow countrymen and countrywomen you have hit, if I may so phrase it, straight in the eye. You have given them exactly what they want, and you have your reward in cheques of colossal magnitude. You came to fill a long felt want, and you have filled it to the overflow. Either by instinct or by careful investigation you have diagnosed the type with almost miraculous exactitude; you have catered for your readers, you have consulted their tastes, as a successful restaurateur caters for and consults the tastes of his everyday customers. In

not one of your works from first to last is there the faintest glimmer of that humour of which they are so distrustful. Your sentimental passages have often brought tears to their eyes, but never has a sentence of yours raised a smile upon their lips. No suspicion of "smartness," either of thought or phrase, mars one of your pages. Your scorn of "style" is very magnificent. Your religion, with which your books are replete, is of the good, broad, misty kind—so broad as to have no outlines, so misty that nothing whatever can be discerned in it. Your characters are drawn in lampblack and Chinese white, and the edges never blend into a grey. If the persons of your imagination do improper things, you never omit to underline and point out clearly their impropriety. You never, as your public would say, "palter with vice" or blur the outlines which divide it from virtue. There is nothing of Art in your books. You avoid the epigrammatic as a valetudinarian avoids the influenza bacillus, and your sentences fall flat as falls the flounder upon the fishmonger's marble slab.

You have, one might almost say you are, the genius of the obvious. I doubt if any writer has ever written in a dozen volumes so many true things as you wrote in the single volume "Free Opinions." There was positively nothing in it that any human creature could contradict or even query. You told us everything that we all knew before.

Then, in the matter of quantity you really do give your readers a vast deal for their money. It is doubtful whether so many printed words of any other writer can be bought for 4s. 6d.

Finally, you have brought the art of advertisement to a perfection undreamed of even in the *Times* office or in the United States of America. Your ostentatious seclusiveness, your clamorous reticence have stimulated curiosity where the more bungling methods of a Barnum would have failed egregiously, and your

occasional excursions into publicity have been timed as carefully as an adroit boxer times his knock-out blows. Such artlessness as yours is the supremest art.

So I have written to point out to you, Madam, the secret of your success, because I know well enough that you are ignorant of it yourself. You have, one cannot but be quite sure, won your public, and made your fortune as unconsciously, as spontaneously, as instinctively as a baby breathes.

1906.

## XI

### THE DAY OF THE CHILD

I WAS a more or less taciturn listener the other evening to a round-the-fire discussion, by a little group of rather more than ordinarily intelligent persons, of the question, What is the salient characteristic of our time?—by our time was meant the last thirty years—what there is, if there be anything, about it which, from the standpoint of the social historian a hundred years hence, will distinguish it from all the other times that preceded it?

There were as many answers forthcoming as there were interlocutors. The spread of Democratic Ideas and Democratic Policy; the rapid Growth of Armaments; the Development of Mechanical Inventions and the Application of Science to Life; the Decay of Religion; the Labour Unrest; Religious Toleration; the Increase of Material Wealth—these were some of the solutions offered, and each was supported by a goodly muster of evidence and argument.

None of them, I confess, impressed me as being altogether on the mark. There was truth in each of them, but only partial truth, it seemed to me. All these things were only surface things, I seemed to think. The changes they indicated did not go very deep, they were not likely to be followed by any lasting consequences, nor were they sudden in

their origin, nor, when you came to think of it, quite peculiar to our generation.

There is reason to doubt, for example, whether Democratic Ideas are spreading, or have been spreading, for the last ten years. There is, on the contrary, I think, and quite perceptibly, a check to the spreading of them, due, perhaps, to disappointment with the results of some of their practical applications. No one can believe that the Growth of Armaments has more than a transient significance. The development of mechanical inventions was much more rapid and portentous a century ago than it is to-day. We, it is true, have our bicycles, our telephones, and our cinematographs, and are doing some odd things with electricity. But our fathers and their sires first put the steamship on the sea and the steam-locomotive on the land; and these truly changed the face of the earth and the customs of men. We have done nothing so big as that. Talking of inventions, by the way, what of ours will compare with the Invention of Printing?

Religion is not decaying, that's flat! It is changing its forms, but change is not necessarily decay. There is probably more interest taken in religion in this twentieth century than there has been since the sixteenth; there is more interest taken in it in this year 1914 than there was in the year 1904.

In the eighteenth century there really was a decay of religion; then, practically, all cultivated persons were sceptics. To-day even the most prominent men of Science are freely uttering doubts about Darwinism and misgivings as to the validity of the Mechanical Theory of the Universe. Has not Sir Oliver Lodge assured us that man has an immortal soul? Roughly, one may say that if the nineteenth century was a period of doubt diversified by faith, ours looks like being a period of faith, if not of downright gaping credulity, diversified by doubt.

And so on, and so on, down the list of all those replies which I heard put forth to the question, What is the most salient characteristic of our time? Personally, I did not add to the list. I contributed nothing to the discussion, for I am by way of being slow-witted, temperamentally cautious, not to say timid, and I always need time to think things over. I have been thinking that question over for the last few days, and at the moment I am rather inclined to flatter myself that I have found an answer to it.

The most salient characteristic of our time, I suggest to you, that which distinguishes it from all other times of which we know anything, is the change in the attitude of civilized society towards the Child.

Doubtless that change has not been quite so sudden as it looks. It can't have been, it must have been slowly prepared for. But if you take up any newspaper, magazine, or publisher's list of what are called "serious" books to-day, and compare them with similar literary productions of, say, twenty-five years ago, it will seem to you as though within that quarter of a century the Child had risen from a position of comparative insignificance and negligibility to one of supreme and wellnigh all-absorbing importance.

It seems only yesterday that the Child was regarded as a subject for experts only, for persons peculiarly or pecuniarily, and anyhow professionally, interested in him; for mothers to some extent, for nurses to a lesser extent, and to a lesser extent still for schoolmasters and schoolmistresses. To-day, the very man in the street is an expert, and has views of his own. A while ago it was taken for granted, accepted as a fundamental fact of the nature of things, that mothers, just because they were mothers, and by virtue of some natural or divine intuition or inspiration, knew all that was to be known, or, at any rate, all that was worth knowing, of children. A common and current feeling on the subject was admirably summed

up by the lady who remarked, "Children? I should think I ought to know something about children, I've had ten and buried seven of them!"

To-day, judging by what one sees and hears all around one, the assumption would seem to be that the mother—just the mother as such, very especially the poor mother—is the last person in the world in whom knowledge of children and of things appertaining to children is to be expected, or to whom the uninterrupted and uninterfered with care of them is to be entrusted.

The Child to-day is Everybody's business; a business which Everybody, finding him or her self unable to attend to personally, is apt to delegate to committees—to committees not infrequently consisting almost entirely of spinsters. "Soon," cried a much-badgered and indignant working-mother to a lady visitor, who had called to inquire after the condition of her little ones' teeth, or ears, or night-gowns, or feeding-bottles, "soon you will allow us to have nothing to do with our own kids but bringing 'em into the world."

"I shouldn't be at all surprised if that were so," responded, more truthfully than tactfully, the lady visitor.

That is not an imaginary episode. It really happened. And that it should happen, and that episodes more or less like it are happening every day, is, of itself, evidence sufficient of that change in the attitude of civilized society towards the Child, which, I am contending, is the most salient characteristic of our time.

There is any amount more evidence discoverable, for the influence that has wrought the change is all-pervading. You can find the evidence wherever you care to look for it. In the newspapers, as I said, in the magazines, in the bookshops, in any street of any city in which there are public exhibitions or places of public entertainment. It is a notable fact,

a fact worth thinking over, that in an age when considerable fortunes are the rewards of successful playwrights, the largest fortune ever made by any playwright was made by a play written expressly for children and acted chiefly by children.

Some of the largest incomes earned by authors to-day are earned by the authors of children's books and, which is every bit as significant, by the authors of books about children. The boy, both in the nursery and the schoolroom, is the fashionable hero of present-day fiction. One of the most popular novels of last autumn was a study in child psychology, a study even more minute and elaborate in its analysis than was Shakespeare's presentment of the mind of Hamlet or George Eliot's of the soul of Tito Melema. Twenty, or even ten, years ago no publisher who knew his business would have even considered a manuscript having such a subject-matter as its theme. Oh, there have been children in popular fiction before our time, of course; but they were in the fiction what they were in the life of those days—subordinate and minor.

Talking of fiction suggests the query: What has become of the father, the middle-class and upper-class father, of the early and mid-Victorian novel; the whiskered and always stern if sometimes benevolent tyrant who posed as a god, or, at least, as an oracle, to his subdued and, in his presence at any rate, silent and acquiescent offspring; the father as given us by Dickens? There is no need to think of Gradgrind. Gradgrind was probably a detestable exception, even in his own day.

But take Mr. Dombey. Mr. Dombey was a good father, as fathers went in his time, negligent of, and unsympathetic towards, his daughter, but honestly attached to his little son. But now think of all the fathers of your acquaintance, and see if you can spot one of them whose relations with his son, in

the faintest degree, resemble those of Mr. Dombey with Paul. Can you even imagine little Paul calling Mr. Dombey "Daddy"? I rather fancy that a modern youngster with a "Daddy" would find it difficult to believe in a Mr. Dombey. He would accept him as a figure of fiction, as he would accept the child-eating Ogre in a fairy story, but surely not as a reflection of reality.

That transformation of the "Sir" and the "Papa" of last century into the "Daddy" of this is not the slightest of the symptoms of the change we are talking about.

The great, the unique, discovery of this generation is the importance of the next. It is hardly saying too much to say that hitherto each adult generation has held that the one thing desirable for its non-adults was that they should be brought up, as far as possible, as were brought up their fathers before them. How often have we not all of us heard from our parents' lips brief or lengthy admonitory lectures, beginning with such words as "When I was a boy" or "In my father's time"? And how often have we not silently resented them, and suffered under a burning sense of their inadequacy and irrelevance? How often have we not painfully resisted the temptation to fling back the retort "Well, so much the worse for you, then!" and to ask, "Do you really consider yourself so satisfactory a person that you think the best that could be done with us is to shape us in your own image?"

The unctuous self-complacency implied in the appeal to the Past is rapidly vanishing from the consciousness of the modern parent. It has at long last been born in upon us that, judged by any reasonable standards of efficiency, we are by way of being failures. We have an uneasy feeling that, on the whole, we have made and are making rather a mess of things. Those of us who read our *Sunday Chronicle*

and have followed with interest and appreciation the series of articles by Mr. Raymond Coulson are likely to have this feeling of uneasiness in a more intense degree than others, though those others have it, too, for it is a widely diffused feeling. Think what it was that Mr. Coulson set out to prove—no less than our all-round failure, the failure of our morals, of our religion, of our statecraft, of our intellect, of our science, of our social leadership. And the worst of it is, as the Scotsman said of the neighbour who called him a liar, “He has proved it!”

Well, now, we are naturally disinclined to attribute this failure of ours to grapple with the world and mould it according to our highest ideals and most ardent desires to any defects inherent in our own being. As naturally we are disposed to lay the blame of it upon our forbears and the scheme of upbringing they imposed upon us, and we have decided that to that scheme, or to anything like it, our own offspring shall not be subjected. “Spare the rod and spoil the child,” said Solomon, himself the dismalest of parental failures. Through long centuries the advice has been acted upon; the rod, with all it symbolizes, has not been spared. But men in the lump have been spoiled in the making all the same. And so we have become dubious of the wise man’s wisdom, and the rod is being relegated to our museums.

So it has come about that the sciences of education, of pedagogics, of child-culture—if they may be called sciences which have never yet come within a thousand miles of being scientific—are in the melting-pot, and we are all experimenting with the Child, blindly experimenting, if you will, but still experimenting, laboriously, conscientiously, not unhopefully, one may claim.

There is another reason, too, why the Child is coming into his own and engaging more and more of the solicitude of his elders. He is getting scarcer. He is going to be scarcer still, oh, ever so much scarcer !

1914.

## XII

### THE ENDOWMENT OF MOTHERHOOD

SOME two years ago when I called attention to the continued and persistent decline of the birth-rate, I ventured to predict that when people began to realize all that decline implied and involved they would get into "a state of mind"; that we should hear some odd things said, and have some queer proposals offered.

So far people, that is the public at large, have not realized all, or anything like all, which the decline in the birth-rate implies and involves. The public at large is always too busy, doing things that do not matter, to realize anything that is not of immediate, practical, urgent importance. We shall have, I fancy, to wait another ten years or so before we get a genuine popular scare about the birth-rate.

But already that small number of persons who are capable of intelligent anticipation, who can see a reasonable distance beyond their noses, are beginning to talk, and in some cases to act.

I daresay you have noticed that we hear a good deal more about The Child than we used to hear five or ten years ago. One can scarcely glance through a newspaper without seeing that something is being done somewhere, either by way of classes for young mothers, or the improvement of the milk-supply for infants, to keep up the population by checking

the waste of infant lives. It does seem to have occurred to people at last that when a child has come into the world it is just as well to take a little trouble to keep it there. All the same, in spite of these spasmodic and sporadic but entirely worthy efforts, the infant death-rate remains stationary, and the birth-rate continues to fall quarter after quarter with a monotonous regularity.

When anything serious is going to happen, when society is going to "right-about-turn," or to make a start in a new direction, the first indications of the coming change are usually to be noted in the utterances of two or three far-seeing men, men with sensitive mental noses, if I may so put it, men whom the rest of the world regards as eccentric, faddy, unpractical—above all unpractical. These men put forward proposals, make predictions, sometimes in a tentative, hesitating way, sometimes whimsically and with wild extravagance, according to their characters and temperaments, and these proposals raise a storm either of ridicule or of denunciation.

The storm subsides, as storms do, and all is quiet for a time; but meanwhile a certain number of other men, whose minds have been stirred and whose brains have been stimulated by the upset, continue to talk, to discuss with each other, and to think about the proposals and predictions that the far-sighted and sensitive-nosed men have made; they turn these proposals over and over, they winnow out the grain from the chaff of them; finally they offer them to the public in a shape that is neither ridiculous nor extravagant, and in the end the originally unpractical proposals turn out to be the most practical things going, and are unanimously adopted. Everybody wonders why they had never thought of them before!

Something like this process seems to me to be going on as one of the less obvious consequences of

the continued fall in the birth-rate. Just a few people are beginning to realize that while a death-rate cannot decline beyond a certain point a birth-rate may go on declining until it disappears altogether, and that it may quite easily decline until the population itself begins to fall. These few people are also beginning to realize that if the decline in the birth-rate is to be checked it must be checked by something more potent, more practical, than pulpit thunder or newspaper nagging.

You cannot frighten or bully people into having children. If you really want them to have children you must offer them some inducement sufficient. The question is, Does society as a whole want its individuals to have children? At present I do not think it does; in the near future I rather think it will. Already a few men are pointing out to society what sort of inducements it had better think about offering.

A few months ago, in a couple of letters to the *Times* which have since been republished as a pamphlet, Mr. Sidney Webb, of the London County Council, after calling attention to the fall in the birth-rate and giving facts and figures, and proving what beyond all doubt was the cause of that fall, ended by remarking that :

“ We shall, indeed, have to face the problem of ‘ the systematic endowment of motherhood,’ and place this most indispensable of all professions upon an honourable economic basis. . . . Such a revolution in the economic incidence of the burthen of child-bearing will, of course, be deprecated by the ignorant and unthinking as calculated to encourage the idle and thriftless, the drunken and the profligate to increase and multiply. The grave fact that we have to face is that under our existing social arrangements it is exactly these people, and practically these only,

who at present make full use of their reproductive powers. . . . To the vast majority of women, and especially to those of fine type, the rearing of children would be the most attractive occupation if it offered economic advantages equal to those, say, of school teaching or service in the post office. At present it is ignored as an occupation, unremunerated, and in no way honoured by the State. . . . To the present writer it seems that only by some sharp turn in our way of dealing with these problems can we avoid degeneration of type—that is race deterioration, if not race suicide.”

Well, you see there is Mr. Sidney Webb, a member of the London County Council, a late chairman of the Technical Education Board, one of the most moderate and level-headed men in England, a man who has never said an extreme thing in his life ; and in his opinion the only way of escape from the pit lies in the endowment of maternity, that is to say, in suitably remunerating women for services efficiently rendered.

A few weeks ago, speaking in the City Temple, Mr. H. G. Wells, a well-known and widely popular author of what are called scientific romances and novels, a man about as different in type and character and temperament from Mr. Sidney Webb as any one thing can be different from any other thing, a man who is the very human antithesis of Mr. Sidney Webb, touched upon the same smouldering, but as yet not burning, topic. Said he, speaking of the future state :

“ As soon as a woman is likely to become a mother the medical officer, man or woman, as the case may be, will report this to the proper official, and her special income as prospective mother in the State will begin. Then, when her child is born, I imagine, there will begin an allowance for its support, and

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this payment will continue—large or small according to the well-being of the child and the need the State may have for children—as long as the children are in their mother's care. . . . How it is going to be done remains to be worked out. Possibly all this money will be paid to the mother alone, possibly it will be paid to the parents."

Essentially the same idea as Mr. Webb's, you see, only put a little differently, as ideas always are put a little differently by different brains. Mr. Webb's endowment of maternity would not go much further than free doctors, free milk, free meals, free education and scholarships at secondary schools and universities for the children; Mr. Wells is for paying a salary to the mothers downright.

Of course, a whole host of questions and difficulties rise up to confront and clamour at Mr. Wells and his proposals. Is, for instance, the same salary to be paid to all mothers, regardless of their husbands' or their own incomes? Is the same amount to be paid for good healthy children as for weakly puling ones, and if not why not, inasmuch as it costs more time and money to rear a weakly child than a robust child?

What is to happen if the inspector after his monthly call reports to the authorities that the mother is not putting her allowance to the best possible uses, but is spending it on ostrich feathers? Is the salary to cease forthwith, and, if so, are the children to be left to the neglect of the mother, or are they to be taken away from her and sent to an institution, and if so is their father not to be considered in the matter?

Is the husband to be fined or otherwise punished if his wife shirks her duties as nurse, and, if so, exactly how much discipline may he apply to keep her up to her work? May the husband married to a slut apply to the State to remove the slut and furnish him

with a more capable mother and nurse in her place ? Are unmarried mothers to share in the endowment, and again if not, why not, since illegitimate children, if they are to be converted into useful and healthy citizens, require quite as much care and nutriment as legitimate children ?

If the State is to endow the mother, is a woman to be allowed to become a mother when she chooses or only when the local authority chooses ? These are only a few of the first queries which leap to the lips on reading Mr. Wells's sermon in the City Temple.

Then on this same subject we have Mr. Bernard Shaw, the most famous if not the most popular playwright of our day, declaring somewhere that if he were a woman he would demand £2000 for the production of a child !

Of course, Mr. Shaw did not mean that exactly ; but he has learnt by experience that if you want people to pay heed to what you do or to what you say, you must do something striking or say something extravagant. What he did mean was in all essentials what Mr. Webb and Mr. Wells meant, that if the fall in the birth-rate is to be stopped, and if deterioration and decay are to be avoided, the question of the production and rearing of children must not be left just where it is ; must not be left entirely to the individuals ; but that something must be done, something of a corporate, of a national sort ; and that it is time the public should begin to think what that something shall be.

So here, you see, you have happening what I said always happens when a change is coming ; but a long time before the change actually comes. You have two or three men with long sight, men who scent social changes as some of the lower animals scent changes in the weather, making proposals and predictions, one of them cautiously, tentatively, the others whimsically and extravagantly.

So I suggest to you that it would be well for us to think this matter over while there is plenty of time for thought, to turn it over in our minds, to talk about it to each other over our pipes, on Sunday afternoons, say, if we are too busy all the rest of the week. We might try to find out if something cannot be done, some little thing, perhaps some very little thing, but something of the right sort.

Might we not, don't you think, begin with the widow, the widow who is left destitute with two or three young children? Would it not be better (if she is a decent body and a capable mother) to endow her with an allowance sufficient to permit her to stay at home and look after those children rather than compel her, as we do now, either to send them to the work-house, or to leave them to themselves, or to a neighbour, while she goes out for twelve hours a day to earn her own and their livelihoods. To do that, you know, might actually pay us. *We might save by it.* It would be a very short step, of course, towards the endowment of maternity, but still it would be a step in the right direction, and one short step in the right direction would seem to be about as much as one generation can take.

1907.

## XIII

### JOHN SMITH

It strikes one as a little odd, and as not a little ironical that one of the direct results and immediate outcomes of the Old-age Pensions Act should be the death by starvation of a number of old people. Yet certain events which came to light at an inquest in London some time ago would seem to put it beyond doubt that such is the lamentable fact.

The inquest was held upon the emaciated body of one John Smith, an appropriately typical name. John Smith, it appeared, had drawn the pension with which a benevolent and well-meaning Legislature had endowed him and then he had made the almost incredible and quite fatal mistake of trying to live on it. In reckoning up how far five shillings a week would go he had unaccountably forgotten the price of one of life's chief necessities, a roof to cover the head. As on a historic occasion Lord Randolph Churchill "forgot Goschen" and the oversight cost him his political career, so John Smith forgot some unnamed landlord and the oversight cost him his life. In other words, he paid four shillings a week for rent and tried to live on what was left.

It had not occurred to him, as it did not occur to the legislators who so handsomely endowed him, that the smaller the income the larger is the proportion of it which finds its way into some landlord's pocket. A

man with two pounds a week will probably be compelled to pay 20 per cent. of his income in rent ; a man on five shillings a week must needs pay 80 per cent. of his.

"There are dozens of men like John Smith living in just the same way" said a juror at the inquest "And now," added the Coroner, "you are going to tempt other old men and women out of the work-houses where they are well fed and kept clean to try and live on five shillings a week. Numbers of them have no friends and their end will be like John Smith's."

When that Coroner said "you," he probably was not addressing anyone in particular, anyone visible at the moment. He was addressing the nation at large, the nation which has been congratulating itself on having finished at long last with the aged poor ; and, as addressed to the nation at large, or, at any rate, to that portion of it responsible for the Old-age Pensions Act, his observations did not altogether lack point.

The provision made by the Old-age Pensions Act is, in truth, a direct provocation and temptation to old people in workhouses to leave those hospitable institutions and try to live on five shillings a week—to try to accomplish the impossible, that is.

Of course, from a strictly economic and non-humanitarian point of view that may be a most acute and excellent stroke of business. Old people in workhouses linger long. In workhouses the infant death-rate is high, but the death-rate of persons over sixty-five years of age is comfortingly low. Even centenarians are not as rare as you might expect in workhouses. In fact, if you really desire to be a centenarian—it seems a queer desire, but there are those who harbour it—I am not sure that you could do better than enter your local Union as soon as possible after three score years and ten have been passed.

There is no reason why old people should not linger long in workhouses. There is a sufficiency of good

plain food, enough warmth to keep the blood moving, and a freedom from anxiety such as is seldom enjoyed outside. In one workhouse at Nottingham, I am informed, "afternoon tea is served at 4 P.M." The old folk "get up when they like and go to bed when they like," an advantage which is the lot of few of the sons of men. Also they are provided with congenial employment suited to their age and capacity.

Now, outside the workhouse, on five shillings a week afternoon tea is not served at 4 P.M. nor at any other hour. I doubt even whether the pensioner could go to bed and get up when he liked, because I doubt if there would be any bed to go to or to get up from. There would certainly not be a sufficiency of good plain food, and there would be no more warmth than the weather provided. Anxiety would certainly not be lacking. In these conditions the old people would not linger long. They would do just what John Smith did, must do, what the juror declared dozens of them, in fact, are doing, and so you see a real saving is effected and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, to that extent, is rendered happy. Yes, yes, from a strictly economic and non-humanitarian point of view it is desirable that old people should be tempted to leave the workhouses and try, ineffectually, to live on five shillings a week.

But it was not from a strictly economic and non-humanitarian point of view that the Old-age Pensions Act was recommended by the Government to the consideration of the House of Commons and the country. Economic in some respects, it was suggested, the Act might be, inasmuch as it costs more than five shillings a week to give an old person his tea at 4 P.M. and the other of those indulgences I have mentioned; but non-humanitarian, no. On the contrary, it was pointed out again and again, and insisted upon, that the effect of the Act would be to bring joy into thousands of humble homes by sitting grandfather and

grandmother at opposite sides of the fire, and setting any number of aged hearts beating with exultation. Well, I dare say it has done that. Let us hope so. But it has done something else. It has killed John Smith.

We are told now that the framers of the Act never intended that an old-age pensioner should live, or, at any rate, should pay rent, out of his pension. That pension was intended to be a sort of grant-in-aid to such families as had the happiness, or the misfortune, to count old persons past work among their number. It would enable such families to keep their old people at home and make of them desirable instead of superfluous and detrimental members of the family circle. We may believe that, in many instances, in many thousands of instances, it has done that ; though that it should have done that is an unpleasing commentary on the social condition of our people. It is a disturbing reflection that there are thousands and hundreds of thousands of homes in England wherein five shillings a week, plus an extra mouth, makes a welcome addition to the family income.

The existence of these homes was counted upon and correctly counted upon by the promoters of the Old-age Pensions Act ; but what apparently they did not count upon, or make provision for, was the existence of the John Smith class, the old people without families, without friends, but with stomachs to be fed, with backs to be clothed, and with that curious love of personal freedom which is so fine a thing in a Briton when he is well-to-do ; so wretched, so fatal a thing when he is without visible means of subsistence. Thousands of these old people are outside the workhouses ; thousands of them are inside the workhouses, and the old-age pension tempts those who are outside to remain out when they ought to go in, and those who are in to go out when they ought to stay where they are.

The reports both of the majority and of the minority

of the Royal Commissioners on the Poor Law have made it plain to all who read, even while they run, that our workhouses, as a whole, are, to say the least of it, undesirable mansions, so undesirable that the best thing we can do with them is to get rid of them altogether ; but these reports have made it plain, also, that the workhouses are less undesirable as residences for the aged than for any other destitute class. On the whole, the aged are treated passing well in the majority of our workhouses. Very certainly even the worst of workhouses is an altogether better shelter for an aged head and a softer last-but-one resting-place for old bones than the best lodging that can be afforded out of five shillings a week. I imagine the grave itself is a softer resting-place than that.

Here, then, is the practical point to be considered, if those dozens of men living as John Smith lived are not to die as he died, by slow starvation. The obvious and common sensible thing to do would seem to be to empower the pension authorities to withhold the five shillings a week from all applicants who cannot prove that they are in a position to live on it, to eat, to drink, to dress, and to sleep on it. That seems so simple a thing to do that it is pretty certain it will not be done. Common sense and the Poor Law are still miles apart.

## XIV

### HEGEL'S THEORY OF THE STATE

HEGEL'S theory of the State is adumbrated in his works: it is rather more than adumbrated in his "History of Philosophy." It is summed up and set out with great minuteness in his "Philosophy of Right." This treatise—a book of some four hundred pages—is, he tells us, "nothing more than an attempt to conceive of and to present The State as in itself rational." He makes no attempt to imagine an Utopia or to construct for our admiration a State as it ought to be.

"It is just as foolish," he says, "to fancy that any philosophy can transcend its present world as that an individual could leap out of his time. If a theory transgresses its time and builds up a world as it ought to be, it has an existence merely in the unstable element of opinion, which gives room to every wandering fancy."

When Philosophy attempts to teach the world what it ought to be Philosophy always comes too late. Signs of Athenian decadence were already apparent when Plato wrote his "Republic." "Philosophy as the thought of the world does not appear until reality has completed its formative process. . . . When Philosophy paints its grey in grey, one form of life has become old, and by means of grey it cannot be rejuvenated, but only known. The Owl

of Minerva flies only when the shades of night are falling."

For Hegel everything is Process, Development; and Development is a continual reconciliation of opposites. The new thing that becomes does not become by destroying the old things, but by including them, by taking them up into itself, as it were.

The whole progress of development in history is, for Hegel, the enlarging, the gradual realization of Freedom. In the Oriental Monarchies—he gives China as an instance—only one man is free, the Emperor. The individual personality has no rights; the very laws are only crystallized customs "the accidents of personal power and arbitrary rule." Nothing is stable but everything is petrified. In the Greek States only *some* are free; the barbarians and the slaves have not even the form of freedom.

In the Modern State—what he calls the Germanic State—all are free, at any rate all are hypothetically free, have at least the form of freedom. It is the idea of the Modern State that all should be free.

To be free—in the Hegelian sense—a human being must be something more than an individual, a subject. He must be a person, that is to say, he must possess "*rights*," rights which are recognized as such by other persons: an unrecognized right is not a right at all, it is nothing, it is nonsense. Rights are the creation of the State not the endowments of Nature. They are "natural" only in the sense that men are born *for* them, not born *with* them and not having any innate ideas of them.

A man's rights are conditions necessary to the proper fulfilment of his duties, and necessary to the full consciousness of his personality. A State in which these conditions are not apparent is not, as yet, a State at all.

Now the Hegelian defence of Property, of private property, is based upon the assumption that no man

is fully conscious of his personality until he has embodied it in Property. To be without property is to be without a condition essential to freedom. The *raison d'être* of property is not the economic *raison d'être*—it is not because property enables you to satisfy wants or to take pleasures, it is because it allows you to embody, to express your will, your personality, in an external object. It is the satisfaction of *ownership* not the gratification of *appetite* that is the justification of private property. Property is the visible and palpable externalization of the Will. The more a thing externalizes and embodies your will the more is it your property. Even your own body is more yours the more you have control over it. A paralysed limb is hardly your property at all. A man who, as we say, can “use his hands” has more property in those hands than one whose fingers are all thumbs. When the tongue becomes an unruly member it ceases to be property, it becomes the possessor, rather.

“Property divorced from use,” says Hegel, “is an unreal abstraction.” “Accordingly every one must have property. That is the only kind of equality it is possible to consider. The assertion that the property of every man ought in justice to be equal to that of every other is false, since justice demands merely that every one should have property. Indeed, amongst persons variously endowed inequality must occur, and equality would be wrong.”

This Hegelian view of property is one which all sane Socialists—certainly all Socialists of what is called “the Fabian type”—without scruple or demurrer may accept. If it condemns out-and-out communism, it condemns no less certainly the systems of property-holding with which Socialists are at war. If property may only be justly that in which a person can externalize his personality and embody his will, it is interesting to speculate as to what sort of a personality it is which is expressed in a £1000 of stock in the London

and North Western Railway. A man may well express his personality in a house, in the architecture of it, in its furnishing and equipment, in the laying out and culture of the garden that surrounds it. But what sort of a stupendous personality must it be which can find adequate expression only in half a dozen mansions and a couple of palaces, scattered about Europe? A man may stamp his individuality upon a dozen acres of land. No man has individuality enough to stamp it upon twelve thousand acres.

Hegel is fully at one with the Socialists in recognizing that the greatest danger to a State is the existence of a *proletariate*, a wholly propertyless class. . . . It is the direct duty of the State, he asserts, to prevent want, that is, propertylessness arising among the units. "It is not simply that starvation must be guarded against. The wide view is that there shall never arise a rabble, a mass."

Here, for instance, is a passage that gives full adhesion to the Minority Report of the Poor Law Commission.

"Not the arbitrary will only, but accidental circumstances, which may be physical or external, may bring the individual to poverty. This condition exposes him to the wants of the civic community, which has already deprived him of the natural methods of acquisition and superseded the bond of the family stock. Besides, poverty causes men to lose, more or less, the advantages of society, the opportunity to acquire skill or education, the benefit of administration of justice, the care of health, even the consolation of religion. Amongst the poor the public power takes the place of the family in regard to this immediate need, dislike of work, bad disposition and other vices, which spring out of poverty and the sense of wrong. . . . The effort of society shall be to discover a general remedy for penury and to do without random help."

To charity enough still remains. “It is a *false* view of charity to restrict its help to private methods and casual sentiment and knowledge, and to feel itself injured and weakened by regulations binding upon the whole community. On the contrary, *the public system is to be regarded as all the more complete the less remains to be done by private effort.*”

The Hegelian view of Crime and Punishment is a little difficult to get at, and, I confess, to me not entirely convincing even when got at. The punishment of the criminal is a sort of restoration of harmony that has been jangled by the crime. The criminal is one who cuts off the branch that supports him; and the trial and sentence put him on the tree again, make him once more a member of the community. Private revenge is merely the infliction of a new wrong. By submitting himself to judgment the criminal once more identifies himself with the community and cancels the wrong by an act that is above the passion of individuals. In a perfect State the criminal would demand punishment as a right, and the most terrible thing that could happen to him would be for the judge to turn to him, refuse to sentence him and tell him that he was not above punishment but beneath it, as it were, outside it. In his “History of Philosophy,” Hegel boldly defends the State of Athens for its condemnation and execution of Socrates. Socrates, he points out, was condemned to death, not because he was found guilty of certain offences against the laws of Athens—of his guilt there could be no doubt whatever—but because he practically refused to plead, refused to acknowledge the authority of the Court which tried him, and refused to exercise his right of choosing his own punishment. Yet a little later on he contradicted his own action and gave away his own case by refusing to escape when he had the chance. “I judge it better and more just to sit here

and suffer the punishment accorded," he said, "or else, by the dog of Egypt, how long ago would these bones and muscles have gone to Megara or to Boeotia had they been moved only by their opinion of what was best, and had not I, Socrates, considered it juster and better to bear the punishment which the State laid upon me instead of escaping and fleeing from it."

Hegel points out that this most excellent resolution came a little too late, and that to have been consistent Socrates should have acknowledged the justice of the finding of the Court and the right of the Court to try him. He points out also how Pericles, quite as noble a character as Socrates, had a truer conception of the State when he submitted himself to the judgment of the sovereign people, and entreated the citizens for clemency to Aspasia and Anaxagoras.

"There is nothing dishonouring," says Hegel, "to the individual in this, for he must bend before the general power, and the real and noblest power is the people. This acknowledgment the people must have direct from those who raise themselves amongst them."

In his assertion of the absolute supremacy of the State, even in matters of conscience, Hegel goes further than perhaps most of us would be prepared to go with him. It is idle as against the State, to declare that you are conscious of having done your duty. He says in so many words :

"The first principle of a State is that there is no reason or conscience or righteousness or anything else, higher than that which the State recognizes as such. They, for example, who resist any demands made on them by the State, such as to defend the Fatherland cannot be tolerated in a true State. This miserable freedom of thinking and believing what men will is not permitted, nor any such retreat behind

personal consciousness of duty. If this consciousness is not mere hypocrisy, in order that what the individual does should be recognized as duty it must be recognized as such for *all*. If the people can make mistakes the individual may do so much more easily than the people. Now law also has a conscience and has to speak through it; the law court is the privileged conscience."

While vigorously asserting the right and duty of the State to punish, Hegel recognizes that as the State gets higher, more fully realizes its own essential nature, punishments will tend to become more lenient. "Although a crime could not be allowed to go unpunished, since it would then be constituted as right, yet because a community is sure of itself a crime is always merely a single isolated act of hostility without any foothold. By means of the very steadfastness of the community crime becomes a mere subjective act. If the community is still unsettled an example must be made by means of punishment. But in the sure and firm community the position of crime is so unstable that a lesser measure of punishment is sufficient to supersede it."

The highest actualization of the State yet attained is that topped by a Constitutional Monarch. "The Constitutional Monarch," says Hegel, with perhaps some unconscious irreverence for royalty, "is the dot upon the i"; but Hegel is all for representative government, and the really sovereign power—the legislative body—must consist of representatives, not of delegates. Deputies are chosen under the belief that on the whole they have a better understanding of State business than the electors." But to the deputies are not committed specific mandates or explicit instructions. . . . Representation is based upon confidence. We have confidence in a person when we believe in his insight and willingness to treat

our affairs as his own according to the best light of his knowledge and science."

I imagine that Hegel's ideal legislative body would represent *interests* rather than *districts*, or districts only so far as they were the abiding places of interests.

"To regard the deputies as representatives," he says, "has a significance that is organic and rational only if they are not representative of mere separate individuals, or of a mere multitude, but of one of the *essential spheres* of the community, and of its larger interests. Representation does not mean that one person should take the place of another. Rather is the interest itself actually present in the person of the representative."

The business of the representative is not to be automatically pushed by public opinion, but to study it with a view to extracting its essence. Its essence, its inner nature, makes but a poor sort of show sometimes in its concrete appearance. So the duty of the State is to give the people what they want, but not, possibly, by the means by which they seek to get it. "Of any reasonable end we may be sure that public opinion will ultimately be pleased with it, recognize it, and constitute it one of its possessions."

Public opinion is both false and true. It is the part of the Statesman to distinguish the true.

"He who tells the time what it wills and means, and then brings it to completion, is the great man. For him the inner significance and essence of the time is actualized. He who does not learn to discriminate in public opinion, which is one thing in one place and another in another, will never produce anything great."

The existence of classes more or less well defined by occupation is necessary to the existence of the State. The grouping of men in families is the first foundation of the State, and the grouping of them economically

in classes is the second. All civilization arises from agriculture. Agriculture implies settlement, a waiting for the fruits of labour, and, consequently, something to defend. The introduction of agriculture is always revered as a divine act, and celebrated by religious rites. The business of the industrial class is to alter the form of the products of Nature. The industrial class is indebted for its subsistence to the interposition of the wants and labours of others. "Consequently," says Hegel, "the sense of freedom and order" (two things always inseparable from the Hegelian point of view) "has mainly arisen in Cities. The agricultural class needs to think little about itself. What it acquires is the gift of a stranger—Nature. With it the feeling of dependence is primary. With this feeling is easily associated a willingness to submit to whatever occurs. The agricultural class, therefore, is more inclined to subjection—is more static; the industrial class is more inclined to freedom—is more dynamic."

The two classes together with the class of public servants—those whose business it is to serve the general interests of society and whose private wants must be supplied by the State that takes their services—these classes make up the State. In the Hegelian State there is no room at all for the gentleman at large. "A human being without a vocation," he says, "is a *mere private person* who has no place in a real universal"—and for Hegel the State is the Real Universal in concrete form.

"Still the individual in his exclusiveness," he goes on, "may regard himself as the true universal, and may fancy when he adopts a trade or profession that he is sinking to a lower plane. . . . But it is a false notion, that a thing, when it attains the realization that properly belongs to it, limits itself and gives up its independence."

When Hegel was writing his "Philosophy of Right" the whole of the economists and statesmen of Western

Europe were given up to the doctrines of Individualism and *Laissez-Faire*. In their view the proper functions of the State were limited to those of the soldier and the police constable. With such a barren conception Hegel would have nothing to do. He repudiates it as definitely and indubitably as the most orthodox Socialist of to-day. For him the State is the Family raised to its highest expression, and become a spiritual entity. The State, in suspending, or rather, in transcending the Family, has taken over its powers and its responsibilities. If a man is the member of a community that has done this he has just such rights in it, or claims upon it as he had in or upon the family. Hegel goes as far as the last of the Education Acts, and about as far as any future Education Acts are at all likely to go.

“The Universal Family,” says he, “has the right and duty, if necessary to suspend the will of the parents. . . . The boundary line between the rights of the parents and those of the community is hard to define. The parents generally suppose themselves to possess complete liberty with regard to education, and to be able to do whatever they wish. Whenever instruction is made public the chief opposition comes from the parents who cry out about teachers and schools merely because they are displeased with them. In spite of this the community has the right to proceed according to tried methods, to send their children to school, to have them vaccinated, &c. &c.”

He goes in some respects further than any Modern State has gone yet. “The community has the right and the duty to take under its guardianship those who wantonly squander their subsistence and that of their family.”

I think it is not difficult to deduce from Hegel our new demand for a National Minimum. A proletariat in a State is an evil that must be prevented; and a proletariat he defines as a considerable number of

persons who have fallen below the standard of living deemed necessary for a member of society in that particular community. "A government," he says in his "Miscellanies," "may not rest content with merely demanding that something *should* occur, or with the hope that it *may* occur, or even with placing restrictions on certain circumstances which might make it difficult for it to occur: it only deserves the name if its regulations are such that what ought to come to pass, is actually brought to pass." It is in the State only that you have a true individuality and a true universality. It is the essential condition of the best kind of individual action. It is not a mere sum of persons and institutions; it is "something more"—a bringer of new things. It is "the realized moral idea—the will manifesting itself—making itself clear and visible—substantiating itself." The State is absolute rationality. It is its own motive and its own end—such things as accident, need, particular strength and wealth are mere elements of its historic development. "The State is the march of God in the world," he says, "its ground or cause is the power of reason realizing itself." The various wills and activities of the individuals and corporations are as essential to the State as the State is to them; but in the true State these wills prove to be as one will, the State's will, though distinguishable and distinct from other." The distinction seems to me to be a little difficult to draw.

Hegel places the State above the Church as an organism and above the religious convictions and consciousness of the individual. "The State appears to be something finite whose province is of this world; while religion represents itself as the realm of the infinite. Thus the State seems to be subordinate. But this version of the matter is highly one-sided. The State, in so far as it has particular ends and functions, is of the world and finite. But that is only

one side of it. Only to a perception which is void of spirit is the State merely finite. The State has a vital soul."

While cherishing and honouring individuality, with what he would call its true sense—that spiritual freedom which owes its real being to union with the whole—Hegel has an inveterate dislike and distrust of anything that smacks of eccentricity. From that smaller, meaner sort of individuality it is the province of culture, of education, to liberate us.

"We call those men cultured or educated," he declares, "who can perform all that others do without exhibiting any oddities of behaviour. True originality which creates its object desires true culture; while false originality adopts insipidities which are always characteristic of a lack of culture."

On the much discussed question of whether the same code of morality that is binding upon individuals is also binding upon States in their relations with one another—a subject so dear to debating societies—Hegel stands for the negative. . . . He comes down on the side of ordinary common sense. "The State, unlike the individual who is a unit in an organism and whose conduct must be dictated by the interests of that organism, must be the lord of itself; there is no higher tribunal whose sovereign authority it can acknowledge." The commonweal has quite another authority than the weal of the individual . . . the State has its reality, not in an abstract, but in a concrete existence. This existence, and not one of the general ideas held to be moral commands, must be the guiding principle of its conduct. The view that World Politics in this assumed opposition is presumptively in the wrong, depends on a shallow view both of morality and of the nature of the State in relation to morality."

His criterion of morality as between States would seem to be *survival*, and survival only. That we

survive is right at any given moment of history and the famous defence of the criminal "*il faut vivre*," would, in the case of a State accused, be adequate and convincing. "Civilized nations may treat as barbarians," he says, "the peoples who are behind them in the essential elements of the State. . . . Wars and contests arising in such circumstances are struggles for recognition on behalf of a certain definite content." Each historic State, each dominant State, is the representative, the instrument, the highest outward expression of the World Spirit, for its particular epoch—although it can make an epoch but once. "In contrast with the absolute right of this State to be the bearer of the current phase in the development of the world spirit, the spirit of the existing States are void of right, and they, like those whose epochs are gone, count no longer in the history of the world."

All this sounds uncommonly like the dictum "Might is Right," and, in point of fact, it is that dictum philosophically interpreted. The conqueror is not right because he conquers; but he conquers because at his particular moment of world development he is right. Those qualities of his which gave him the victory were the particular qualities needful at the moment, to push the human spirit into its next stage of development, those very qualities, which in their turn, are destined to become useless or positively harmful. From this point of view, this wide and philosophic standpoint, all historic events, say an incursion of triumphant barbarism or the break up of a civilization by a volcanic upheaval from below, which to contemporaries may appear to be an unmitigated and irretrievable calamity, will be seen to be only the birth throes of a new and better, that is to say, a *more highly developed* ordering of mankind. So what seems to be only might, turns out to be right, after all. The men who forced their own State to the

front, as it were, were instruments, though they did not realize it, of the World Spirit.

Then Hegel justifies War. In War you have the recognition that the claim of the State to the life and property of individuals is higher than their claim to their own property and life. "The absolute power is brought into contrast with all that is individual and particular and makes their relative worthlessness a fact of consciousness." By the very act of sacrificing his life for an end not immediately personal to himself, the individual is compelled to realize in what the spiritual reality of that life consists. The individual life is voluntarily negated, that the life of the universal may be affirmed.

The only courage to which Hegel allows ethical import is the courage displayed in defence of the State; all the rest is the mere brute pluck of the animal or the robber or the duellist.

"True bravery consists of a readiness to offer up oneself in the service of the State so that the individual counts only as one among many. Not personal fearlessness, but the taking of one's place in a universal cause is the value of it. . . . In it is found the highest self-control and independence which yet in its existence submits to the mechanism of an external order and a life of service. An utter obedience, a complete abnegation of one's own opinions and reasonings, even an absence of one's own spirit is coupled with the most intense and comprehensive direct presence of the spirit of the State. The most hostile attitude towards individuals is allied with perfect indifference, or even, it may be a kindly feeling towards them as individuals."

You will note, of course, how directly this philosophic view of war differs from the ordinary empirical view of those who condemn it as always, and in all circumstances, a folly and a crime. I daresay you will remember the passage in Carlyle's "Sartor Resartus,"

in which this view is illustrated after the Carlylean way. "What," speaking in quite unofficial language, Teufelsdröck asks, "is the net purpose and upshot of war? To my knowledge, for example, there dwell and toil in the British village of Dumdrudge usually some five hundred souls. From these, certain 'natural enemies' of the French are successfully selected, during the French war, say, thirty able-bodied men: Dumdrudge, at her own expense, has suckled and nursed them: she has, not without difficulty and sorrow, fed them up to manhood and even trained them to crafts, so that one can weave, another build, another hammer, and the weakest can stand under thirty stone avoirdupois. Nevertheless, amid much weeping and swearing they are selected: all dressed in red: and shipped away at the public charges some 2000 miles, or say only to the south of Spain, and fed there till wanted. And now in that same spot in the south of Spain are thirty similar French artisans, from a French Dumdrudge, in like manner wending: till at length after infinite effort, the two parties come into actual juxtaposition: and Thirty stand fronting Thirty, each with a gun in his hand. Straightway the word 'Fire!' is given; and instead of sixty brisk, careful, craftsmen, the world has sixty dead carcasses, which it must bury and anew shed tears for. Had those men any quarrel? Busy as the Devil is, not the smallest! They lived far enough apart; were the entirest strangers; nay, in so wide a universe there was even unconsciously by Commerce some mutual helpfulness between them."

Thus, you see, the very fact that these soldiers had no personal quarrel with one another seized upon by Carlyle and again and again adduced, by the way, by Tolstoi, as of itself a sufficient condemnation of War, is the element relied upon by Hegel to acquit and justify war when war is brought before the tribunal of Philosophy.

Occasionally, I am bound to admit, Hegel when treating of war does seem to condescend to a sort of special pleading, as, for instance, when he says that "Just as the movement of the Ocean prevents the corruption that would be the result of perpetual calm, so by war people escape the corruption which would be occasioned by a continuous or eternal peace." That may or may not be true, but, anyhow, it is a dictum and not a philosophical deduction. And the same remark applies to his plea that war has a value because it compels people to realize the essential finiteness and contingency of individual life and property. Nature, I rather fancy, will always do that much for her sons. Concerning Hegel's attitude towards war, however, it is only fair to remember that he wrote with the War for the Liberation of Prussia very fresh and fragrant in his memory. After having been trodden in the dust, Prussia had pulled herself together, and by one of the most wonderful acts of national resilience and redemption in European history, had fought for and won her independence and fairly started on that career which is completing itself under our eyes now, in the German hegemony of Europe. We may take it as only natural and proper, I think, that German philosophers should see evidence of the World Spirit's most benevolent achievement in the battle of Waterloo.

The ideal State of Hegel must stand four square to every wind that blows. "The strength of a State," he says, "lies neither in the multitude of its inhabitants and fighting men, nor in its fertility, nor in its size, but solely in the way its parts are by reasonable combination made a single political force, enabling everything to be used for the common defence. The rights of a State," he goes on, "are the utility of the State as established and recognized, and War has to decide, not which of the rights asserted by either party is the true right—for both parties have true

rights—but which right has to give way to the other.”

To conclude. In the Hegelian philosophy the world is based on Reason—*is* Reason—and the State is the highest affirmation of the Rational in the sphere of the concrete. It is moral substance. States arise and decay, and pass, but each State has something in it of the affirmative life ; and “ it is the theme of philosophy to ascertain the substance which is immanent in the show of the temporal and the eternal which is present in the transient.”

The State, therefore, can recognize no authority but its own. It can acknowledge no abstract rules of good and bad. It is, as has been happily said of it, “ the absolute universal compared to which everything else is a particular. It is the phenomenon of God.”

It knows no judge but History. *Die Weltgeschichte ist das Weltgericht.*

1910.

## XV

### A TALK ABOUT BOOKS

WHEN, some time ago I was at pains to set out the names of what I held to be the thirteen best novels in the English language, I honestly thought I had said my last word on the matter. I little knew my readers, it seems. I had received a good many letters on the subject before, many more than I could possibly answer privately ; but I have received more letters since. The chief purpose of most of these later communications was to remonstrate with me for having selected " this " instead of " that," which, in the writer's opinion, was the better book of the two. My correspondents do not appear in the least disposed to do what I hoped they would do, accept my views as those of a literary Pope whose dogmas were " of the faith " and not to be questioned. I may not have preferences, it seems, unless I am prepared to justify those preferences. Now " a justification of preferences " is the best definition I know of the term " criticism." That is just what criticism is, and should be—a justification of preferences. When I merely say I like a thing I am not criticising that thing ; directly I give my reasons for liking it I become a critic. What my correspondents are now asking of me is that I should do no less a thing than criticise thirteen great English works of art—a largish order. I realize now, as I never realized before, the

wisdom of the old judge who advised the young one to deliver his judgments unhesitatingly, but never to attempt to give his reasons for them. If Destiny had allotted me thirteen weeks and twenty-six columns for the job I might be inclined to tackle it, but failing that handsome allowance of time and space I must politely but firmly refuse. However, I will do what I can. I am in a literary mood to-day, and we will spend half an hour or so together (by your leave) in talking quietly about some of the novels in my baker's dozen.

Here is the list again, then ; and let me say at the outset that I made no attempt to place the books in order of merit :

Tom Jones (Fielding)  
 The Talisman (Scott)  
 Esmond (Thackeray)  
 Silas Marner (George Eliot)  
 Great Expectations (Dickens)  
 David Copperfield (Dickens)  
 Emma (Jane Austen)  
 Richard Feverel (Meredith)  
 Harry Richmond (Meredith)  
 The Woodlanders (Hardy)  
 Tess (Hardy)  
 Jane Eyre (C. Brontë)  
 The Cloister and the Hearth (C. Reade)

On the whole I think these are the thirteen novels which I prefer ; but there were others, heaps of others, which ran each one of them so hard in my affections that it was only with the greatest reluctance and difficulty I made my final and definite selection. I don't think I hesitated long over "Tom Jones." When one begins to talk about great English novels "Tom Jones" comes naturally, spontaneously, to

the lips. Is there any other piece of literary work in our language which gives quite so adequate, so vital, a picture of the life, the times, the characters it seeks to depict as Fielding has painted for us on those glowing pages? "Tom Jones" is something more than a book, it is the father of a great school of books. Had Fielding never written we should certainly never have had a Dickens; I don't think we should ever have had a Thackeray. And what we should have done without those two I do not care even to speculate. The great novelist has this advantage over the mere historian—that his creations are men and women of flesh and blood, while those of the historian are but sawdust-stuffed figures moved by wires marked "ambition," "love," "prudence," "policy," and what not. The characters in the best fiction are real figures of our English life. To the most of us the great Duke of Marlborough, for instance, so far as we know him from our reading of history, is a name and little else; a great name, of course, but the name of a force rather than of a man. Then think of Uncle Pumblechook in "Great Expectations!" Why, we know him better than we know any of our own blood relatives. We should recognize him in a moment if we met him in the street. Now in "Tom Jones" there are no fewer than four characters at least who live for ever in our memories as Uncle Pumblechook lives:—Tom's self, Squire Western and his daughter, and the philosopher. When you know Squire Western you understand the backbone of the Toryism of the time; in Sophia you see your own great-great-grandmother in her habit as she lived, and a very pleasant and pretty habit it was to be sure. And then the high spirits, the vigour, the essential healthiness of the book! How the man enjoyed writing it; how he infects his readers with his own enjoyment. Always the note of the great artist, that. There are passages in "Tom Jones,"

I know, scarcely suited to the reading of school girls of fifteen ; but, then, it was not for girls of fifteen that Fielding wrote. He was a full-blooded, sane-minded man, and his book is a book for full-blooded, sane-minded men, and women too. The grown women, it seems to me, who could be hurt by aught in "Tom Jones" must be already long past hurting. So no more of Fielding now. I am solid about "Tom Jones." I am ready to argue as to the merits of some others on my list, but for the pre-eminence of "Tom Jones" I am ready to fight.

As to "The Talisman," I admit a few doubts, though I am clear as to its superiority over "Ivanhoe," the book apparently most beloved by most of my correspondents. Personally, I think "Quentin Durward," "Guy Mannering," and "The Heart of Midlothian" better books than "Ivanhoe." "Ivanhoe" is a rattling boy's book, I freely admit, but I must think it fails to touch men who have long left school. Half its characters are mere puppets in historical costumes, and those historical costumes are often wrong, for Sir Walter was no careful archæologist. Rowena, for instance, is a dressed up doll. I defy any one of you to sit down and write me out from memory a character sketch of Rowena. Rowena had no character. A far, far better novel than "Ivanhoe" is Kingsley's "Hereward," a book over which I hesitated long before I closed my list. There is too much of the stage-stagey about "Ivanhoe." It reminds you of a spectacle play at His Majesty's when no expense has been spared over the mounting. Here let me make a frank confession. I am no very ardent admirer of Sir Walter. Sir Walter not infrequently bores me. There are so many long, bald, arid passages even in the best of his books ; passages through which it is a weariness to travel. Sir Walter's descriptions

seem to me always a bit too descriptive. And then his strongest supporters must admit that he did some downright bad work. Of course I know he did some supreme work too, work that will live for ever; but time I think will winnow away bushels, nay, tons, of chaff. This age, I believe, reads Sir Walter so much because its parents read him and gave him to their early youth. We are apt to take a little too much on authority in these matters—a good enough habit when we are quite sure of our authorities, but personally I am not quite sure of our fathers. They made many queer mistakes. Some of them loved and quoted Tupper, it must be remembered. I think I chose “The Talisman” because it is the work of Scott’s I remember best. Richard Cœur de Lion sticks in my memory. I can see him now as he swaggers with his great square shoulders out of his tent, gaily humming to himself snatches of a popular melody of the time, and humming it all out of tune. It was a fine touch that: the big, strong, beefy man! In this matter of Sir Walter I do not ask my readers to follow me. I admit I may be wrong about Scott—a painful admission for a literary critic to make—many of the finest critics disagree with me, Ruskin, R. L. Stevenson, Henley, and others. But I must needs say what I think. It would be cowardice of me to sit here writing what other people say I ought to think.

Of Thackeray’s novels I selected “Esmond,” I really believe, because it is the least like Thackeray of them all—a quaint reason, I hear you saying. Here again, as in the case of Sir Walter, I know I shall be in a minority among critics. I admire Thackeray with all my brains, but I have never been able to love him with all my heart. Had he never written “Esmond” I should have placed “Vanity

Fair " among my thirteen without an instant's dubiety. "Vanity Fair" for me is Becky Sharp, and Becky Sharp is one of the immortals. In English literature she stands, unquestionably, beside Portia, Cordelia, Imogen, and in my private opinion (which I will venture only to whisper in your ear), on a plane a bit higher than theirs. She is one of those real characters of which I spoke just now, a more real figure of English life than Queen Elizabeth or Queen Anne. The position of "Vanity Fair" is established on a firm foundation; time will fail to shake it. But "Esmond," you must remember, was what the French call a *tour de force*. It was written in a style and language that were not Thackeray's own, but the style and language of the time in which Esmond himself moved. And I love the style and language of that period, love them more than the style and language of our own time or of Thackeray's. I love the polish, the urbanity, combined with strength, of the days of the Jacobites. And, over and above mere questions of style, "Esmond" is made immortal by Beatrix of that name. Beatrix Esmond is one of the half-dozen great women of English fiction; one of the twenty great women of all fiction. She is more interesting than Becky because more complex, drawn in larger, subtler lines, or curves, I had better say. The portrayal of Beatrix was one of the boldest things that any novelist has ever attempted. In "Esmond" too Thackeray has dropped that cheap and shallow cynicism which marred so much of his best work. I don't believe that Thackeray was at heart a cynic, not a bit; but it too often pleased him to pose as one, and the pose being a pose, it is not attractive. In fine, between "Esmond" and "Vanity Fair" it was a toss up with me, but the coin fell with the glorious little head of Beatrix uppermost.

When I came to George Eliot I sat and feebly fingered my pen for the best part of an hour. Three, at least, of George Eliot's books are masterpieces, and two others are more nearly masterpieces than any English novel that has been written in the last ten years. At first I put down "Middlemarch," and then, after a minute or two, I scratched it out again. "Middlemarch" is too long and too discursive to be a perfect work of art. It contains some quite perfect work, but as a whole it is imperfect. It is also too terrible, too much like life itself, and to read it twice is like living a life a second time. Nathless, of itself it is all sufficient to make and to secure a mighty reputation. Had George Eliot written nothing else, "Middlemarch" alone had given her a topmast place in English letters. Then I tried "The Mill on the Floss," and when I thought of the early boyhood of Tom Tulliver I nearly left it there. But I also remembered Stephen Guest, that prig of prigs, evidently beloved of the author, and I ran my pen through the title. "Adam Bede" came next; but I soon obliterated "Adam Bede." "Adam Bede" always raises my dander. I almost dislike George Eliot when I think of her treatment of Hetty Sorrel. How she hated poor little kittenish Hetty, with the hatred almost of an acrid old maid for the woman who has dared all and lost all. The cold-blooded way, too, in which the author takes it for granted that a gentleman who has wronged a girl of humble station cannot, may not, just because he is a gentleman, be so much as expected to set the wrong right, rouses every such generous instinct as I have. So out went "Adam Bede." "Silas Marner," both in thought and literary style, is as nearly perfect as a novel can be. It is short (and shortness is of itself a merit), it is compact, it contains scarce a word that is inessential to the telling of the story. The little pictures of quiet, dignified country life charm us, while they shame us

when we contrast it with our own. It abounds in humour. It contains passages of rare beauty. No other writer has ever portrayed children with the delicacy, the insight, the sympathy, the large womanly appreciation of George Eliot, herself a childless woman. All they who love children (and they who do not miss one of life's keenest and deepest emotions) will forgive, and more than forgive, George Eliot, with all her faults of taste and temper and occasional priggishness, for her tender, loving portrait of the child in "Silas Marner." For that book, too, I am ready to fight. Come one, come all, I fearlessly champion "Silas Marner" as one of the greatest novels in our own or any other tongue.

How am I to say a critical word of Charles Dickens ? One does not criticise one's dearest friend when, for a while, he takes his place in the armchair on the other side of the fire. And it is friendship of the truest sort that one always feels for Dickens when one takes a book of his from the shelf. Oh, I can see his faults well enough, his blemishes innumerable, when the critical side of me comes to the top, that is ; but somehow when I think of Dickens the critical faculty always sinks out of sight. In a word, I love Dickens with a love that overwhelms my vast admiration of him. And it was with "Great Expectations" that he won my love. The great heart of the man showed itself there, the exhaustless humanity, the wide sympathy that went out even to the outcast and the rogue, just because rogue and outcast were fellow-men. On the side of the poor and the oppressed Dickens always stood a gallant knight ; but in "Great Expectations" that brave, wise love of his embraced the very low-down criminal. If I may be allowed to say so here, that spirit of his was the spirit of Socialism—not the Socialism of the street corner or

the platform, but of the piteous heart of Man. But it is not for his possession of these high moral qualities that I claim for Dickens the crown of artistry. All these a man may have, and yet write very indifferent books. A novelist must be something more than a great man, he must be a great artist too, and it is for its artistic qualities, in the first place, that I set "Great Expectations" in my baker's dozen. The portrayal of Pip (a self-revelation, be it remembered, the book being written in the first person) is a veritable triumph of characterization, far, far finer than that of David in "David Copperfield." David presents his friends for us most admirably; Pip depicts himself. One notes the little weaknesses—the perky little self-conceit, which he lets out, spite of himself, as it were. Pip is a proof, if proof were wanting, how possible it is to great art to make the commonplace interesting; for Pip is quite interesting and quite commonplace; there is naught striking or heroic about Pip. There are critics, I believe, who declare Joe Gargery to be overdrawn. I do not agree with those critics. Gargery is not overdrawn; he is drawn from intimate observation and loving sympathy, that is all. He only strikes us as being overdrawn from the fact that we seldom observe intimately, and that we have so little of loving sympathy for men outside our own immediate class circles. I know of no essential greatness in fiction that is lacking in "Great Expectations." Fiction is made up of description, of dialogue, and of characterization, and in each one of these "Great Expectations" is supreme, it seems to me. Read the description of the foggy morning on the desolate marshes in the opening chapters, and tell me if the greatest of landscape painters could have made you realize the scene more adequately than Dickens does here in the cold black and white of printed words. You shiver as you feel the chilliness of the damp-laden air. You want to turn your coat collar up. Consider

the humour of that Christmas party, not a sentence that rings false or strained, only the unnecessary left out. Of course a Christmas party never said so much that you like to hear without saying a good deal that you do not care to hear; and all that you do not care to hear, all that would add nothing to your amusement, Dickens omits, just because he is an artist and not a photographer, as Zola is, for instance. Take the Pocket household again; could anything be more absolutely true, more irresistibly comic? Nine times out of ten the humour, the abundant humour of Dickens, was true; just now and then it degenerates, the comedy drivels away into farce. His pathos is less often right, he too frequently places an onion in his handkerchief when he wants to evoke our tears. But in his great moments his pathos is consummate. The death of Betty Higden in "Our Mutual Friend," of Sidney Carton in "A Tale of Two Cities"—you will find nothing better than those though you ransack the libraries of Europe and America. Dickens is a little out of fashion now, I know. A certain school of critics is a little apt to sniff at him, to twitch the nostrils when he is mentioned, and to raise the eyebrow. I heard a young man just down from Oxford the other day call him "vulgar." I didn't even laugh at the youth.

Dickens was one of the few great artists who had honour in his own generation. Popularity is no proof whatever of greatness; the shouting crowd can never confer the wreath of immortelles. That must always be given by the elect—the really capable critics, that is. Many a great artist never is and never will be popular. Take Miss Marie Corelli or Mr. Hall Caine, for instance, as examples of the popular which is not the great. Their works sell in hundreds of thousands. For one reader who prefers Meredith

to them, there are at least a hundred who prefer them to Meredith. But in another fifty years there will still be men and women of good taste reading and admiring Meredith, while probably no one at that time will so much as have heard of Marie Corelli or Mr. Hall Caine ; because there will be lots of other writers as good, and as bad, as they, appealing to the long ears of the crowd ; whereas it is most unlikely that we shall have more than one Meredith in a century. Dickens won popularity because he appealed to the heart of the people ; he achieved his greatness by appealing to the judgment too. It is given unto few artists to do both. Even now I expect nine-tenths of his readers imagine " Oliver Twist," " The Old Curiosity Shop," and " Pickwick " to be his best books, whereas those books alone would never have given him his place among the immortals. Ask the next man you meet what passages he admires most in Dickens, and the chances are he will tell you the death of Little Nell and the death of Paul Dombey, both of them instances of false pathos, onion-pathos, if I may say so. Now the death of Dora in " David Copperfield " is the genuine article itself, not a bit forced or overstrained. One recognizes that oneself would have felt just as David felt about it. The merit of " David Copperfield " is not artistic completeness so much as absolute truth to life. There is exaggeration, of course, here and there, for exaggeration was always Dickens' besetting sin, but for the most part the book is wonderfully true. And some of the purely descriptive passages are matchless in the whole range of English literature. I may mention, as an example, the storm at Yarmouth. Turner with his miraculous brush never painted a storm better than did Dickens there with pen and ink. If I had space I would quote the whole passage here, but as it is I advise you to turn to it for yourselves. One hears that storm, one feels the wind howling down

the streets. Note again the development of character, always the crucial test of a novelist's power, as it is shown in *Steerforth*. See how the faults of the boy grow into the vices of the man. *Steerforth* was a brute to begin with, and yet one quite understands his attraction for David, the rather milk-soppy little boy. A friend of mine was saying to me the other day that Dickens had never drawn a woman. It is true, certainly, that when he tried to draw his ideal woman he failed egregiously, as witness the tame and uninteresting *Agnes*. It is true, also, that he never comprehended the infinite complexity of femininity sufficiently to make so elaborate a study of it as Meredith has done again and again, but I can't help feeling that *Betsy Trotwood* and *Peggotty* are true women, and women who will live in the future as surely as, say, *Falstaff* lives to-day. To say that Dickens often wrote badly, that his style is often slipshod and newspaperish, is as cheap and easy as it is true to say. But Dickens at his best is hard to beat, and I venture to assert that at his best he never has been beaten.

I shall not want to fight or even to quarrel with anyone who declines to agree with me as to "*Emma*." I put "*Emma*" in my baker's dozen mainly because I think Miss Austen to be one of the greatest of English novelists, and "*Emma*" to be her greatest, her most characteristic, work. Miss Austen is unique. There is no one who has delineated English middle-class domestic life quite so perfectly as she. Her subtle, delicate satire, so finely woven as to be almost imperceptible to a coarse-grained critic, is a thing of itself. But I won't say any more here of Jane Austen. She is emphatically an author to be read by the fireside, with one's pipe between one's lips and one's slippers on one's feet.

George Meredith is the greatest of living novelists. I really don't think there can be any doubt about that, any doubt in the minds of those who can read him at all, that is. And I do not believe that the mass of men will ever be able to read Meredith. Meredith's circle of admirers will widen and widen as the years roll by, but it will never be big enough to include the crowd. If you have never yet read Meredith I strongly advise you not to begin on him at the end of a busy day when your brain is fagged and your mental muscles are a bit flaccid. Compared with most novelists he is like a plate of strong meat coming after a milk diet. And, I must admit, his style is sometimes a little difficult; not because it is really obscure, but because it is too brilliant. It dazzles as forked lightning dazzles, the while it illuminates. Also it is a new thing in literature, and has for the average man all the terrors of the unusual. It wants thinking over a bit, and even the cleverest of us is averse from thinking more than he can help. But take up "Richard Feverel" when your mind is fresh and your brain braced up, and set yourself resolutely to finish the first hundred pages, and I will answer for it that you will finish the book and not care to do much else until you have finished the book. That fight between the two lads will get fast hold of you, and ever afterwards you will be a Meredithian. Go on until you come to the love-making of Lucy and Richard, and you will then vehemently declare that there has been no such magnificent representation of young passion since another supreme artist gave Romeo and Juliet to the world.

If you think I am using exaggerated language in this talk about books, please remember that I am talking about such books only as seem to me the very greatest in our tongue, and when one talks of

the greatest one must needs speak in superlatives. I am speaking in superlatives then, but nevertheless saying sober truth when I affirm that the character of Richmond Roy in "Harry Richmond" is one of the biggest achievements in the world's literature. Roy's is just the type of character in the delineation of which Meredith excels, the type of character that appeals most strongly to his peculiar genius. He has drawn others—Victor in "One of Our Conquerors," Old Mel in "Evan Harrington"—but even he has never done anything quite so superb as Richmond Roy. Roy's is one of those rare personalities, compact of fraud and honesty, of strength and weakness, with a very strong dash of the magnificent, which carry everything before them, including most men and all women. You never can quite make up your mind as to whether such a man is a humbug or a genius, or a humbug and a genius. When opportunity favours such men they become the Napoleons of the earth. When opportunity fails they remain just the Richmond Roys, the Old Mels, the Victors. They are always wandering upon that mysterious borderland which lies between mania and sanity. As one reads of them one wonders at the folly of the people on whom they impose, and yet all the while one has to admit to oneself that had one been there one would have acted just as these fools did. There is some vital force about these men that compels service. The character of Richmond Roy alone is enough to make an artist's reputation. But Meredith has given us a whole gallery of characters. When one closes one's eyes and thinks of Meredith's novels one sees a mighty crowd of wonderful men and women all breathing and alive. I am not surprised that the modern woman, who knows good work when she sees it, should adore Meredith, for he has done her justice the while he has never spared her. His "good" women are not made up of negatives and domesticity. The

best of them have passions that lead them to the perilous edge of the pit. Take any one you like of Meredith's women, Clara Middleton, Diana of the Crossways, Rose Jocelyn, Sandra Belloni, and compare her with, let us say, Thackeray's Amelia in "Vanity Fair" or Agnes in "David Copperfield," and you will see the difference between a real woman with blood in her veins and a wax puppet from the toy shop. I don't mind going further, and saying that Shakespeare's Ophelia and Desdemona, and Goethe's Margaret, about whose virtues the world is too much given to jabber commonplaces, are pale shadows when contrasted with Diana and Sandra Belloni.

I have said, and I stand by my prophecy, that George Meredith will never be popular, but there seems to me no reason whatever why his readers should not increase fourfold even in the lifetime of this generation, if only people would tackle his books in the right spirit and in the right order. Remember that a great work of art is practically exhaustless; it never makes its appeal all at once. A work that convinces you of its greatness at first sight is pretty sure to have something cheap and meretricious about it. You might as well hope to get the right emotions from Lincoln Cathedral on a first visit, or from a Beethoven symphony on a first hearing, as attempt rightly to appreciate a great novel by merely running the eye idly down the first hundred pages. The very things that please or amuse you are probably the poorest; the big things you miss altogether. Then again, when a writer has an individual and an original style, you must get accustomed to that style, attuned to it, so to speak. You must not shy at a phrase turned in a new way as a half-broken hackney shies at a freshly painted pillar-box. You must let the

artist have his own way with you. You must try to believe that he knows his own business best. Do this with Meredith, and you will some day thank me for this little literary talk. Begin with "Richard Feverel," then take "Harry Richmond." By that time I think you will be quite anxious to read "Evan Harrington."

I should not be disposed to cavil were anyone to say that in many respects, in the possession of some important artistic qualities, Thomas Hardy was a greater artist even than George Meredith. His style, for instance, is more facile, more under his own control; it presents fewer difficulties, fewer literary fads; he tells a story more simply, more directly, and keeps closer to his story while he tells it. He plumbs, perhaps, profounder depths of human passion and tragedy. And all this is true. But for me Hardy will always stand below Meredith by reason of his temperament and his narrower outlook upon life. For Hardy is pessimist to the core of his being, pessimist in very grain, and your pessimist can never be supremely great, if only because he sees but one side of a many-sided, most variegated life. No man can judge of a country who stands ever with his back to the sun. The biggest men see the shadows, as many and as black as you like, but they see also the light that produces these shadows. With Hardy Man is the sport of a cruel Fate; there is no reason in things, no right. He says as much outright in the closing passage of "Tess." Now the greatest art, even when it deals with the direst tragedy, stimulates while it awes. Read *Lear*, *Macbeth*, and you will come away shuddering but not cast down, not feeling that the Devil has conquered and that all is wrong with the world. But after closing the covers of "Tess," and still more of "Jude the Obscure,"

you will feel yourself smothered in gloom, gasping, struggling against it as against some hideous black pall with which some colossal demon is trying to stifle you. This feeling is, of course, high testimony to the power of the writer, but at the same time it proves (to my thinking) that the power is not quite of the highest, of the best. But, compared with any other living novelist except Meredith, Thomas Hardy is at the very top of the tree. At least four of his books, "The Woodlanders," "Far from the Madding Crowd," "The Return of the Native," and "Tess," are masterpieces in any and in every sense of the word.

From these I select "The Woodlanders" as the most perfect and "Tess" as the most powerful. If "The Woodlanders" be not a perfect novel, then I must frankly give up the search for perfection in art. It displays all the author's finest qualities, and all at their highest. The very atmosphere of the story is redolent of the odour of English woods; to English nostrils the sweetest perfume in all the world. In the character of Grace we have demonstrated all Hardy's power, and his limitations too it must be admitted, in the anatomization of that elusive, baffling thing, femininity. Hardy's women are not the complex beings of Meredith, nor the dolls and vixens of Dickens and Thackeray. In them we see the eternal feminine made manifest. They are creatures of caprice and passion, motivated for the most part by the simpler, the more elemental motives, but utterly charming all the same. Their influence upon human affairs and the destiny of man is mighty, but it is nearly always an influence for evil, or at least for disruption and disorder. In Hardy's books the "good" woman nearly always comes off badly; the baddish, for there are few downright bad, triumphs

in the end. The more distinctly feminine a woman, the better she fares here below, is one of Hardy's theories of life. Personally, I know of no written passage more sad, more quintessentially pathetic, than the last lines of "The Woodlanders," which show Marty South in the churchyard alone with the grave of her love and her hope. It is one of the most poignant things in literature.

In "Tess" Mr. Hardy for the first time deserted pure art and appeared in the character of prophet and preacher. He boldly challenged Society's most cherished convention by his sub-title to the book—"A Pure Woman," and, it must be admitted, there are not a few passages in the story which have no place in a novel, as such. But at the same time there are other passages which for sheer dramatic power and beauty can safely challenge comparison with any that human brain has ever conceived or human hand written. I don't envy the man his temperament who can read unshaken that nerve-clutching scene between Tess and her husband on the night of their wedding. I remember to this hour how I first read it in the smoking-room of a Manchester hotel, and how in the middle of it I had to close the book for a while and go out into the streets by way of relief from the fearful tragedy of it. In all that portion of "Tess" descriptive of life upon the dairy-farm Mr. Hardy has met Zola upon his own ground and fairly knocked him into a cocked hat. Much of it is photographic, it must be confessed, but Hardy uses his camera in the spirit of an artist and Zola his in the bungling manner of a journeyman photographer. "Tess" is a terrible book, a book that rouses the soul to revolt against the cruelty of God and the stupidity of man. One feels that here is a woman of fine nature and right instincts made

naught of but a plaything by some all-powerful, all-malign Fate. "The President of the Immortals had finished his sport with Tess," says the author, when the black flag had been run up over the gaol. "Tess" suggests a problem to the psychologist and the philosopher. How is it, we ask ourselves, that a man with so fine a feeling for, so keen an appreciation of beauty as Thomas Hardy can take so appalling a view of life and of the ways of God with men? And to that question we can find no answer.

"Jane Eyre" is as full of faults as an egg of meat, but spite of them all it remains a work of splendid and original genius. At times it rises to the loftiest heights of poetry, both of thought and diction. That scene between Rochester and Jane is lyric in its loveliness. "To the finest fibre of my being, sir," says Jane, when Rochester asks her if she loves him. What an answer; an answer surely that any man would gladly die to hear from the lips of the beloved. But I have no more time to speak of "Jane Eyre," or of "The Cloister and the Hearth," the last upon my list, and in my view, take it for all in all, the best historical novel in our tongue. This little chat of ours is ended.

1899.

## XVI

### ABOUT DIVORCE

IT seems that the odd jumble of personalities who compose the Royal Commission on the Marriage Laws have at last made up their minds on two proposals. One of these is that there shall be sex equality before the Divorce Law,—in other words, that the infidelity of the husband, without the addition of cruelty or desertion, shall be grounds sufficient for the granting of a *decree nisi* to the injured wife. The other is that divorce shall be rendered easier and cheaper than heretofore to persons of humble means.

That the first of these proposals should have found favour in the eyes of any considerable number of persons of widely differing religious convictions and divergent moral and social opinions proves that there has been a considerable shifting of the point of view since the days, fifty years ago, when the present Divorce Law first received the sanction of the Legislature and of public opinion.

There can be no doubt whatever that in the opinion of those responsible for what is called the sex inequality of the law an adverse decision in the Divorce Court was held to be in the nature of a penalty as well as a release; and it was thought that a decree of divorce was a severer penalty than a decree of separation. The Legislators held that an act of infidelity on the part of a wife was a graver offence than a similar

offence on the part of a husband, and they sought to penalize the offender with what they held to be a severer form of punishment.

Herein at least they were logical, consistent with themselves, and in accord with the inexorable facts of life. They did not fall into the error, so common to-day, of treating two different persons or sets of circumstances in precisely the same way and then imagining that equality of treatment has been secured. They meted out to the woman a penalty different to that which they inflicted upon the man for the same offence because they realized that the offence was not, and could not be, the same.

And, of course, it is not, and cannot be, the same. Nature, who, after all, even in an age grown so artificial as ours, still plays a predominant part in human affairs, has seen to that. By acts of incontinence a woman can foist upon her husband a child or a family of children, not his own, who shall inherit his property and bear his name. That is a wrong which by the very nature of things a husband cannot inflict upon a wife.

The grave and irreparable character of that wrong the authors of the existing Divorce Law clearly and frankly recognized, and they imposed upon the perpetrator of it a penalty which in their opinion was adequate to the offence—a divorce *mensa et thora*. They regarded a *decree nisi* rather as a sentence on a criminal than as an order of release to the injured party.

If they were correct in their judgment—if, indeed, it be worse to be divorced than to be judicially separated—then they were right in their action. By treating two widely different offences in precisely the same way it would have been, not sex equality, but sex inequality, that they would have established. So much for the point of view from which Divorce is regarded rather as a penalty than as a release.

That, however, is a point of view which the majority of the present Commissioners seem to have abandoned. They are, it appears, more anxious to do something agreeable to the feelings of the injured than disagreeable to those of the injuring party. They realize, probably—we may at least credit them with the realization—that during the last fifty years a change, a change of immense significance, and portentous of many other changes, has taken place in public opinion and in social habit.

Thanks to this change, to be divorced is no longer to be condignly punished ; it is scarcely to be punished at all ; it is even, to some extent, to be advertised. At the time of the passing of the Divorce Act a woman who had been divorced by her husband was something of a social outcast. When she left the Divorce Court she descended to a lower social plane. The doors of Bohemia might be open to her, but against her the gates of Philistia were closed and barred for ever. Social rehabilitation was almost past praying for.

Even the perfectly innocent and injured wife, whose shackles the Law had struck off, was in not much better case. The chances were many that the members of her own family, her friends and intimate acquaintances, held the older-fashioned views of marriage, its duties, obligations, and religious sanctity, and regarded her with dubious and admonitory eyes. She was a less welcome guest in their drawing-rooms and at their dinner tables than she was before her legal adventure. They invited her to their gatherings only when they were quite by themselves, as they would have put it. If she decided upon a prolonged visit to some out-of-the-way seaside resort or to some little-frequented Continental city, she might confidently count on a cordial send-off.

To-day the *divorcée* suffers from no such disabilities. She is looked on as an attraction rather than as detrimental to fashionable and semi-fashionable assemblies,

and even the Outer Suburbs receive her not ungladly. She is by way of proving an asset to any hostess desirous of being smart. Save to feminine hypersensitiveness, the Divorce Court has lost its terrors.

For the amatorily excursive husband it never had any terrors, unless he were a clergyman, a doctor, a family solicitor, a schoolmaster, or a member of one of the other few professions in which the strictest matrimonial respectability has business value. There have been, are, and always will be two standards of sex morality which the Law has been, is, and always will be impotent to reduce by one, for these two standards are established by Nature's decree.

It is not divorce outright, but judicial separation, that the erring husband has to fear and will have to fear until such time—probably a good many years hence—as the new proposal of the Royal Commissioners shall have found its way into the Statute Book. As things now stand, an act of infidelity on the part of a husband is penalized more smartly, incomparably and incontestably more smartly, than any other merely moral offence of any sort or kind whatever. It is treated almost as a crime; indeed, not a few crimes may be more cheaply committed. For one act of incontinence, committed at the age of twenty-one or thereabout, a husband is liable to be compelled by his wife to maintain her *in accordance with his income* until she die, perhaps at the age of eighty, while during all those long years she renders to him no wifely or other service of any kind whatever, and at the same time condemns him to lifelong celibacy and deprives him of all hope of legitimate offspring.

Leaving such personal considerations out of count and regarding the penalty as financial mulct only, a decree of judicial separation may, in the case of a well-to-do man, easily amount to a fine of many, many thousands of pounds. A wanton and millionaire

wife has no such fiscal loss to fear. Before her deceived husband can so much as petition for release from her he must put up securities for her costs, though his income may be only a miserable fraction of hers.

We may not doubt, then, that this proposal of the Royal Commissioners of equalizing matters between the sexes will meet with warm approval and hearty support from all husbands with a turn for amatory trifling. For what man is there who, hard up against the collapse of his matrimonial life and faced with the alternatives of divorce or judicial separation, would not cry, "Divorce, and have done with it"?

If, however, the Royal Commissioners are out seriously for equality of the sexes, they should have gone a little further still and compelled the petitioning wife of an unfaithful but not cruel or deserting husband to petition, not for separation, but for divorce outright. That they have not done that (as it is said) is but another proof of how difficult it is to get clear away from sex inequality.

The proposal to cheapen the cost and increase the facilities for divorce and thus to place it "within the reach of all," as the advertisements say, is one that will meet with little objection, or even with little hostile criticism, in an age that loves to imagine itself to be democratic. Granting that divorce be ever desirable, it is clearly more so when the disagreeing parties are poor or poorish than when they are well-to-do or wealthy.

An ample income is an effective emollient for matrimonial sores or even for gaping wounds. For instance, a married couple with two houses need never be together in one of them. And then there is, in the various cities of Europe and America, a sufficiency of luxuriously appointed and most commodious hotels. A steam yacht, too, is a convenient and secure refuge after a conjugal shindy. But an

ill-assorted and antipathetic couple, condemned by an exiguous income to meet each other daily, if not nightly, in a London flat, or a suburban villa, or a country cottage ! Does any vision of hell itself present a more fertile forcing-house for misery than that ? Well, yes, I think it does ; but we'll let the little splash of rhetoric pass, an you please.

If the Report of the Royal Commission be not entirely a blank cartridge, if it have any effect at all, it will do something to increase the tendency towards making marriage more easily dissoluble. It was notable that very many of the witnesses before the Commission contended eagerly for a considerable increase in the number of causes which should justify an appeal to the Divorce Court—lunacy, drunkenness, various forms of criminality, among others. The most dire of all the corrosives of marital happiness, habitual ill-temper, was, I think, not mentioned.

This mass of evidence will be re-read by a good many people, and will have a sort of cumulative effect. It will help to thrust the Institution of Marriage, as we know it, a little farther and harder into the melting-pot than even it is at present. If it do that it will have done something which it is pre-eminently desirable just now should not be done. It must not be forgotten that whatever tends to make marriage more easily dissoluble tends also to make it more easily, that is, more hastily, less deliberately, brought about.

Let me give an instance of what exactly I mean. A man enamoured of a woman in whose family he had reason to believe there was a taint of hereditary madness might think twice or thrice before marrying her if he knew that lunacy was not a cause for divorce, and that his heedless yielding to desire might chain him for life to the inmate of a madhouse. But the chances are, enamoured men being what they

are, and desire being what it is, that he would not think even once, seriously, before contracting a tie out of which he could slip when the catastrophe occurred.

That catastrophe might not occur until after ten years of married life, but during those ten years half a dozen children, some of them, at any rate, bearing in their brains the seeds of lunacy, might be born into a world in which lunatics are already too numerous.

The science of Eugenics—and it is, or at least is rapidly becoming, a real science, let its silly detractors and ignorant flouters jibe as they will—is giving to the Institution of Marriage a new and tremendous significance.

To him who has even begun to understand this science, Marriage is the central fact of life, because Marriage must precede Good Breeding, and upon Good Breeding the future of the race depends. Good Breeding is the outcome of Good Marriage, and to say Good Marriage is but another way of saying careful, thoughtful Marriage, the deliberate selection of man by woman and of woman by man for parenthood.

There was a time when even sensible people held that passion, physical attraction, was the safest and an all-sufficient guide to Good Breeding—witness the old superstition that the love-child was the finest child. But that time has passed. No informed person harbours that superstition now, and indeed there never was a shred of evidence to support it. To-day we all know that to marry in haste is to do something more than to prepare for oneself a leisured repentance; it is in all probability to bring into the world offspring whose lives will be one long expiation of their parents' ghastly error.

This belief, this conviction, though growing slowly, is growing, and any measure which tends to facilitate

divorce tends inevitably to stop its growth. That is one reason, among others, why, in my heart of hearts, I should not have deeply grieved had some new Guy Fawkes celebrated the anniversary of the old one's failure by blowing the Royal Commissioners and their Report into indistinguishable smithereens.

1912.

## XVII

### THE GENTLEMAN IN BUSINESS

FOR the last week or so there has been going on in the columns of a great daily newspaper a controversy upon a subject which at first glance looks as though it might have considerable practical importance, and yet the more one thinks about it, the more clearly one sees that nothing, in the world of fact, is likely to happen as an outcome of it. At the same time it has a certain philosophic and psychologic value inasmuch as it sheds some interesting light upon the nature and mind and habits of men.

The controversy was started with an article by Mr. H. E. Morgan, a gentleman of high standing in the business world, who, about a year ago, initiated in *The Review of Reviews* another controversy upon a kindred issue. In this article, I seem to remember, Mr. Morgan pleaded strongly for what he called "the Dignity of Business," and protested vehemently against the somewhat sniffy and disdainful attitude taken up towards it by the educated classes of English society.

He complained that the young Englishmen who yearly left the public schools and came down from the universities to embark upon their life's voyage, had a way of giving business the go-by, as it were, and of preferring professional, artistic, and literary to commercial or industrial careers. Thus, he averred, the

nation's best brains are diverted from the nation's Business and England's commercial supremacy, that is to say her "greatness," is gravely imperilled.

That process—of the diversion of our best brains from Business—still continues unchecked, it appears, and Mr. Morgan is still deeply perturbed by it. Something must be done, and something must be done soon, he declares, if our country's "greatness" is not to dwindle into littleness.

And the thing he proposes should be done is no less than making a revolution in the methods, customs, and traditions of our public schools and universities; for to those public schools and universities, in spite of their proven and patent disadvantages, successful business men will continue to send their sons.

However deeply these fathers desire that their sons shall imitate and continue their fathers' achievements, there is something which they desire for them more deeply still, and that is that they shall be gentlemen; that they shall meet, mix with on terms of equality and acquire the tone and manner of, the sons of those other classes of English society whom a fortunate fate has placed beyond the necessity of earning their own livings.

It is a piteous dilemma—that of the perplexed business man—as revealed by Mr. Morgan. He has to make up his mind either to having his son return from Eton or Harrow, Oxford or Cambridge, a nice polished young man with a correct pronunciation, a taste for pictures, poetry, and philosophical speculation, and a fine aptitude for, at worst, doing nothing in particular, at best seeking a modest livelihood in the service of the State, or to having him a "pushing young particle" potent in the counting-house and the saleroom but destitute of that subtle social *cachet* which, as things are, it sadly seems, a certain acquaintance with classical languages and literature is alone able to confer.

This direful dilemma Mr. Morgan proposes to avoid by compelling—in some way not clearly specified, but, if necessary, by Act of Parliament—our public schools and universities to mend their manners; to forgo their insistence of the study of obsolete languages, ancient histories, dead and moribund philosophies. In short, to drop all that has been known as “culture” generally, and instead, seriously and systematically, to teach the young idea book-keeping by double entry, commercial correspondence, and, this surely above all, the fine art of inditing catchy advertisements.

Of course the proposal is hopelessly impracticable, as I said. It were easier, far easier, to effect an upheaval in the moon than to negotiate anything faintly resembling a revolution in Eton or Winchester, in Cambridge or Oxford. An Act of Parliament might destroy Oxford and Cambridge; but nothing short of an act of God materially could change them—change them suddenly, I mean—change them in the lifetime of living men.

Time will change them, no doubt, time has changed and is changing them, but slowly, so slowly that long before even the beginnings of a change such as is desired by Mr. Morgan could be attained, England’s commercial supremacy, so far as it depends upon them, will be as a story that is told and England’s “greatness” as a dream that is dreamed.

If you want to realize how impossible it is to transform Oxford and Cambridge from seats of ancient learning into academies for instruction in Business principles and the inculcation of Business habits, the best and the quickest way to do it is just to go and have a look at them. Subject yourself for an afternoon or so to the elusive, intangible, but penetrating and most effective influence of them. Linger for a lazy while in Oxford quads and Cambridge courts; lunch with undergraduates, dine with dons.

That will give you the realization more quickly and more surely than any amount of argle-bargling. You will come away, I fancy, feeling that there is something in England stronger, more enduring, aye, and even more vitally potent, than the desires and aspirations of her business men; feeling glad, too, that this should be so; feeling glad that this shall continue so to be.

That sort of service, precisely, was what the ancient universities were founded to perform for the sons of men; to educate them in the broad sense of the term, to fit them to live rather than to get a living, to quicken in them a sense of the spiritual, as contrasted with and opposed to, the material values of life.

They often enough do not do it, of course, for the stuff they have to deal with is human stuff, and therefore not indefinitely malleable, but, on the contrary, often enough ineducable, with a leather-like impenetrability to influences and ideas; and you cannot quicken a spirit that is not there to be quickened. But they do it sometimes; on the whole they do it not infrequently. And when they do it I contend, saving Mr. Morgan's presence, they do something more valuable to our national life, more promotive even, I go so far as to say, of our national greatness than they could possibly do by instilling into a number of young men the necessity of turning up at 9 A.M. sharp at their fathers' offices or instructing them in the most modern methods of successfully selling cheap shirtings to negroes.

It is by his apparent inability to understand and appreciate this truth that Mr. Morgan, it seems to me, goes so dismally wrong, both in his diagnosis and in his prescription. He cannot, apparently—in fairness I say apparently, because perhaps he really does know better—rid himself of the notion that England's "greatness" is synonymous with her commercial prosperity.

As a matter of cold fact no nation can be commercially great ; all that any nation can do commercially is to be big. The difference is essential, fundamental. Athens, for example, was a great city ; Chicago—with I don't know how many more inhabitants, with oh ! such public buildings, such wharves, such emporia, such stockyards, such railway stations—is only a big city.

England is great and she is also commercially prosperous ; but she was great before she was commercially prosperous, and there is no reason whatever why she should not remain great long after her commercial prosperity has waned and even disappeared. Or, it might well be—I think perhaps it would be, if Mr. Morgan had his way with her—that her commercial prosperity might swell and swell until it overwhelmed the habitable globe, and yet her greatness be lost to her, be naught but a memory of a glory that had been !

It is not her business men who have made England great. Those have made her prosperous ; that is to say, they have made a smallish proportion of her people wealthy. They have not done more than that in the past, and more than that in the future it would be downright foolishness to look to them to do. The men who have made England great are her statesmen, her philosophers, her poets, her historians, her men of science. In other words, the men who, whether at her ancient universities or not, have at any rate been inspired by the spirit which her ancient universities stand for, which they engender, which they nourish, which still, with all their faults and shortcomings, they continue to sustain.

That spirit is not the spirit of commerce, it is not the spirit which prompts the “ pushful ” young man to fare forth and sell large quantities, at a handsome profit, of cheap shirtings to negroes.

Please understand : I say and feel nothing whatever in derogation of the selling of cheap shirtings to negroes. In the interests of human decency, it is desirable, I daresay, that negroes should wrap their loins about with something, and shirtings, I take it, are more effective for that purpose than palm leaves. And if shirtings are to be sold it is desirable that they should be sold at a profit, and the bigger the profit the better.

The young man who, having been subdued to the public school and university influence, discovers in himself a distinct distaste for the selling of shirtings, or of anything else of a material sort, and a preference for the civil service, the learned professions, for literature, art, or even for humble maltreated journalism, has no call and no right to look down, as we say, upon that other young man who regards the stool in the counting-house as the first stage on the journey to the chair in the board-room.

There is simply no question of looking down or of looking up ; there is a difference, that is all. It takes all sorts to make a nation as well as to make a world, and for our comfortable living we want both sorts of young men. But what we do not want, I venture to suggest, is an artificially forced increase of the pushful at the expense of the polished.

I do not for a moment deny that towards the floating of bales of English-made goods on to earth's remotest shores and to the making of her metropolis the centre of all finance, the mart of all trade, and so forth and so on, there have been devoted qualities, intellectual and moral, which are also essential to real and authentic greatness. All I do contend is that, in so far as they have been devoted to these ends, they have not been devoted to the highest ends.

Successful Business may, sometimes does, call for the exercise of the highest qualities ; but more

often than not it calls for the exercise of qualities which, regarded from any rational or moral standpoint, are assuredly seen to be not high, to be the very opposite of high.

Success in Business, be it remembered, does not consist in the making of good things. It consists in the selling, the skilful and plenteous selling, of things—whether good or bad; the goodness or the badness of the things sold matters not a jot to the success. It does not consist even in discovering wants and then supplying them; it consists rather in faking wants and then supplying them. Successful selling depends more and more every day on artful advertisement; and artful advertisement implies adroit exaggeration, crafty over-statement, cunning concealment of material facts, and emphasis of facts which are not material. It is a trick rather than an accomplishment.

Surely to utilize our great public schools and universities for the teaching of the trick would be rather like setting the organs in our great cathedrals and abbeys to the playing of rag-time!

If Mr. Morgan and his business friends desire schools and universities in which their young hopefuls shall be indoctrinated with Business principles and inoculated with Business morals, why, surely, they can have them. They can have them on the same terms as those on which Sir John de Balliol and the Lady Dervorguilla had Balliol College at Oxford, and William of Wykeham had Winchester School. They can found them now, at once. They can spend their money on such schools and colleges while they live and leave it to such schools and colleges when they die.

There is no hindrance whatever to the immediate materializing of their fondest wishes except their superstitious and often snobbish craving for that sort-of-a-something in the way of a social tone with

which the old schools and universities are, often fondly and vainly enough, believed to endow their children. But it really won't do. One or the other our Mr. Morgans may have but not both. Culture and Commercialism are incompatibles.

1914.

## XVIII

### ABOUT FREEDOM

ARE we getting stodgier? The question has occurred and recurred to my mind with irritating frequency during the last few months. It is somewhat of an idle question, I know; a question impossible to be answered with complete assurance. Moreover, if an answer were found to it naught of much practical utility would come of the discovery.

But then those vain speculations, as the half-wise would call them, are just the very speculations in which the whole-wise love to indulge. They are the holidays of the soul. The essence, the gist, of a holiday is that on it you should do nothing useful, directed to a practical or profitable end.

The man who tells you that he is going on a holiday in search of health makes a grave mistake. Not in that he is seeking after health, for health is an excellent thing to seek after if unhappily you have lost or mislaid it, but in that he imagines that in seeking for health he is getting a holiday. What he should do is first to recapture his lost health and then take it away with him for a holiday. He who goes abroad, or to the sea, or to the country for his health's sake is no more taking a holiday than he who swallows a blue pill or claps a mustard plaster to the small of his back.

A holiday is play; just that. Scientific gentlemen tell us, I know, that the play of young creatures is

really one of nature's most practical efforts. A kitten larking with a cotton reel, they say, is training its nerves, its eyes, its muscles, its claws to capture mice and other small deer when the time shall come for it to earn its own living; and that when small boys get up mock fights with each other they are preparing themselves in the best of all possible ways for the undoing of Hackenschmidt.

That's all true enough, of course, but the point is that neither kittens nor small boys are conscious that they are doing anything useful. They don't do it because they feel it to be useful. They do it just because it amuses them—and that perhaps is the best of reasons for doing anything. Play, which is anything but play, is not play at all. That is why the infallible judgment of children always condemns and resents instructive games, games that teach geography, history, scripture, or what not.

It sheds a little light too upon professionalism, doesn't it? But I won't go into that now, except to throw out the dictum that the phrase "professional player" is a contradiction in terms. Just so far as play is a profession it ceases to be play.

So with the things of the mind. It is well and thrice well, especially on Sundays, to ask oneself questions to which no absolute answer is to be hoped for, or of the answers to which, when we have found them, we can make no use. Never be afraid to waste time, O my friends. The chances are, I verily believe, that when you come to die you will acknowledge to yourselves that the time you have wasted has been the only time you have well and wisely spent.

But to get to the simple question with which I began, a question which perhaps I might almost as accurately have put in another form: "Are we getting older?—we, as a nation, I mean? Is the nation showing the same sort of signs of age that

an individual shows, or, at any rate, some individuals show as the end draws near? ”

There does not seem to be any sound scientific, natural reason why a people ever should grow old, for after all the men and women of each successive generation are born babies just as their fathers and mothers were. In *Cæsar and Cleopatra*, the best play that the only living Englishman who can write plays worth reading has written, Mr. Bernard Shaw makes his hero, who is looking down on the street, say that while he is growing older “the crowd is always of the same age,” and that sounds like a thoughtful and a profoundly true remark. And if it be true of a crowd it ought to be true of a nation.

But I am not sure that it is quite so true as it sounds. There is a notion, supposed to be founded on observation, that the children of elderly people are steadier, soberer, more “old-fashioned” in their ways than the offspring of younger parents. If that be so may it not also be that the people of old nations are older in their ways than the younger, more newly arisen people? That they are less vital, less generous, less interested in affairs that do not immediately touch or concern them?

The question has been forced upon me (as I am forcing it upon you) by the attitude of Englishmen towards the Russian Revolution. I dare say you will think I exaggerate when I declare that the Russian Revolution is the most stupendous event that has occurred in the civilized world since, well—since the world has been civilized. That you should even think that I do exaggerate when I say that is of itself some sort of evidence of that slackness of mind, that slowness of apprehension, which I suggest has fallen upon us all.

The Russian Revolution is the struggle for freedom, and therefore for expansion and development in all sorts of undreamed of and unimagined ways and

directions of more than a hundred millions of people. It is quite the biggest thing in the way of revolutions that the world has ever seen.

Just think of the changes, the world-wide changes, political, social, scientific, intellectual, wrought by the Revolution in France a little more than a hundred years ago ! We are still feeling the wash and impetus of it. We are every one of us different from what we should have been had it never happened. And yet compared to what is going on in Russia the French Revolution was a small affair.

In the mere matter of bloodshed, of loss of life, for instance ! Even now one often hears men of light and leading speak with a shudder of the " horrors " of the French Revolution, and of the " rivers of blood " which had to flow ere liberty was won. But for one life taken in fight or on the guillotine in France between 1789 and 1793 at the least, at the very least, fifty have been given by the Russian people since January 1905. And there have probably been more cruelties, more acts of unspeakable, unprintable savagery inflicted upon Russians since that date than were endured by the whole people of France for five hundred years before the fall of the Bastille.

And then the possibilities, the possibilities for good of this Russian revolt. Since the days of Peter the Great the Russian Empire has been the storm cloud threatening the peace and progress and civilization of Europe. One never knew when the cloud would break or what would happen when it did break. The Russian army at the command of the Russian autocrat was like some mighty weapon of destruction in the hands of a lunatic or of an irresponsible child.

" In a hundred years," said Napoleon, looking eastward, " Europe will be republican or Cossack." More than a hundred years have passed, and Europe is neither—which shows, doesn't it ? how careful the cleverest of us should be when we begin to prophesy.

But it is quite possible that Napoleon was partly right if more than partly wrong. It is possible, it is more than possible, it is probable, that Europe would have been republican to-day had it not been for the long-continued Russian menace. Note how the nations nearest to Russia are the nations where political progress is most backward, who are most under the dominion of the reactionary and the obscurant !

And now it looks as though the storm cloud were not to break at all, but were to be dissipated, and that the sun of freedom were to shine ; or at worst that we were to be permitted to glimpse a star. So it is a pretty big thing, isn't it ?

Now what occurs to me is that we have not treated it as the big thing it is ; that we have failed to see it in its true proportions ; that we have not greeted it with the enthusiasm with which our fathers would have treated it had it happened in their day ; that we have not understood it as they would have understood it ; that, in fact, we are older, more self-centred, stodgier than our fathers were.

Had Christian people, for instance, understood the Russian revolution, realized what was involved in it, what of unthinkable evil its failure portended, what of radiant hope its success promised, they would have been on their knees in their churches and chapels praying for its triumph. But they haven't. They have just chatted about it amiably on their way home from their devotions on Sunday. Had the House of Commons understood it, every man therein worth counting, certainly worth voting for, would have risen in protest when the Government proposed to send our fleet to Kronstadt by way of showing our amity not with the Russian people, but with the Russian rulers.

But they didn't. The protest was left to us, left to a few Labour men and a handful of English women. More than all, had the English people under-

stood it they would have gathered in their thousands in mass meetings up and down the country to cheer their Russian brothers on their splendid and perilous way. But they haven't, they haven't even talked about it, no not as much as they talk about a cricket match, or a colliery accident.

From time to time when Jews have been massacred, or a battleship's crew has risen in mutiny, our papers truly have given the thing half a column of news and an editorial note also. But that is about the sum of notice they have accorded it.

Now turn to the files of the newspapers and to the literature of 1789, and the years that immediately followed. You will find that they are choked with the French revolution; that men seemed to think and talk of little else. It was not so much that they sympathized with the revolutionists, for naturally the timid politicians and the terror-stricken upper classes hated and feared them; but they realized, realized acutely that great world-shaking events were toward, and the best in England did sympathize with the revolution, and gave to their sympathy joyful, bold, and uncompromising expression. The greatest of our poets hailed it with a hymn of thanksgiving, which is still a masterpiece of English literature. The French revolution stirred the blood of England; roused Englishmen sometimes to enthusiasm, sometimes to mistaken wrath. But the point is that it did rouse them.

The same kind of thing, on a smaller scale, happened over the regeneration of Italy. Then England was united, and united for freedom. Once more we had a great poet, and he sang a deathless song of encouragement and of praise. Men helped Italy with their money, and even with their blood. Many a generous-minded youngster of English stock put on the Garibaldian red shirt and died by the bullets of Italy's foes. And Italy has not forgotten.

Englishmen's anger waxed white hot over the story of Neapolitan dungeons and the horrors that were wrought therein.

To-day tortures from which Bomba himself would have shrunk are daily inflicted upon Russian women, and scarce a voice cries shame. Most of the voices that one would have expected to cry shame are bewailing the indignities done to Bambaata's head.

Even the Civil War in America—the best that was to be hoped from which was the emancipation, the political not the social, emancipation of some millions of negroes—stirred England to its depths. England in 1863 cared a good deal more about the woes of Squashee than in 1906 she cares for the wrongs of Ivan Ivanovitch. It is true that in those days England was divided in her sympathies; the classes as ever stood for privilege, but the masses were for freedom, and they let their shouts ring out across the Atlantic that the ears of the emancipators might hear them and be glad.

The difference does want explaining, it seems to me, and the only explanation which occurs to me is a dismal and a distressing one. We do seem to be getting stodgier, more selfish, less responsive to the hope and fears of other peoples, to be losing our enthusiasm for great causes, our delight in ideas. We are fussy enough in all conscience, we set up a childish or a senile babble over the things that do not matter, but great events fail to move us. Our hearts seem to be hardening with the ossification of old age, and when the heart ossifies the end is not far off.

Yes, we are indubitably getting stodgier. Perhaps we are getting cowardly, too. If so . . . But that won't bear thinking about. One thing at least is sure, that a people which ceases to care for others' freedom will inevitably and deservedly lose its own.

## XIX

### ABOUT HAPPINESS

A GREAT and wise but much neglected philosopher once declared that "happiness consists in following preferences."

I wonder, now, whether that strikes you as being in any sense a great and wise saying, as having any pointed application to yourself or to your scheme of life—assuming always that you have a scheme of life, an assumption which would probably be far from correct.

I don't for a moment suppose it does. I suspect, rather, that you regard it as rather a commonplace thing to have said, a sort of thing that anybody might have said, as too much of a platitude and too little of a paradox—for no doubt you have got into the bad modern habit of seeking wisdom only in paradoxes, in a kind of verbal topsy-turvydom, such as was made fashionable among the would-be intellectually *elite* in the 'nineties by Oscar Wilde, and which has since been rendered widely popular among the mob by Mr. Bernard Shaw and his thousand and one plagiarists.

I suspect, therefore, that "Happiness consists in following preferences" is one of those dicta which you feel inclined to brush aside impatiently with an "of course." You would have thought that philosopher to be much cleverer, much more brilliant, if he had said something like this, "Happiness consists in being

comfortably miserable," wouldn't you, now? That would have set you puzzling your head as to what it could possibly mean.

It isn't "of course," you know; it is nothing like "of course." If it were "of course" we should all act upon it and be happy, or, at any rate, a good deal happier than we most of us are. To begin with, it takes a man of average intelligence pretty well half his life to discover with any sort of exactitude what are his real as contrasted with his imaginary preferences, and by the time the discovery is made it is as often as not, indeed more often than not, too late to act upon it without revolutionizing his own life and seriously discommoding the lives of everybody about him.

By that time he has formed habits, habits which were not the result of his doing what he himself liked to do from the beginning, but of his doing what other people liked him to do, or what he believed—quite mistakenly, perhaps—other people thought he ought to like to do.

Let me give an instance of the sort of thing I mean. I have a habit—it is a habit I formed because the practice of it pleased and amused me—when I go to a place of public entertainment, say a theatre or concert, of studying as narrowly as my short sight will permit, the faces, and even the backs, of the audiences.

Oh, I assure you, backs, when scrutinized with the trained eye, are most expressive; you can learn from a back a great deal of what is going on in its owner's mind. Men and women of the world learn how to control their features, but rarely their backs. One of these days I shall publish a monograph on backs which shall replace, or at least supplement Lavater's masterpiece on physiognomy, and add enormously to humanity's knowledge of itself.

But to return. From a study of faces and backs at theatres and concerts I invariably divine that at least

half of the persons present are wishing all the while, or at least a good part of the while, that they were somewhere else ; I perceive that they have come there, not because they wanted to come there or because they thought they would like being there when they had got there ; but because some one else wanted them to come there ; or, because, for some quite inexplicable reason, they were persuaded that there was where they ought to be.

One can see quite unmistakably that they are bored stiff, these people, and that if they followed their own preferences they would get up and hurry away as fast as their own legs or a taxi-cab could carry them. But they don't ; they sit and fidget it out to the last sentence of the actor or the last note of the last cadenza.

Mention of that musical term reminds me that the obviously unwilling listener is a much more common object at concerts, or even at musical evenings, than at theatres or amateur dramatic performances. Music, I am sometimes disposed to think, is an art which doth make humbugs of us all. Observation and my penetrative insight have convinced me that at least one-half of civilized humanity actively dislikes music of every sort, and that what is called classical music it positively abhors. But not under torture would one-fiftieth part of civilized humanity admit as much—which is a most fortunate circumstance for professional musicians.

Let me give another instance of the sort of thing I mean. A night or two ago I was dining with some friends who are enthusiastic bridge players. I do not care for bridge : rather than play it I would sit with my feet on the fender reading any old book that happened to be handy or thinking my own innocent thoughts.

But my host would not allow me to do either of those things while he and his friends were at the card-

table. He declared that it would make them and him feel uncomfortable to be conscious that I was out in the cold—so he put it, though, really, I should have been in the warm, for there was an excellent fire in the room—while he and the others were enjoying themselves. Of course, I knew perfectly well that it would do nothing of the sort, that they would have forgotten my very existence after the first deal. I knew perfectly well that I should make them much more uncomfortable by playing badly, as I always do.

Nevertheless, although I was fully aware that I was doing the wrong thing, that is to say, the thing that makes for unhappiness rather than happiness, so extraordinarily difficult is it even for a philosopher to live up to his own principles that I yielded. And so, by my not acting upon the dictum that happiness consists in following preferences, five sensible men, who might have had a quite happy evening, had an evening that was not quite happy.

But you may say the principle of following your preferences may easily be carried a little too far ; that before you know where you are you may find your preferences coming into sharp conflict with those of other people, and that then there will be trouble. Further, you may say, that on the whole the thing that makes most for happiness in life is personal popularity with all with whom one comes in contact ; and that he who makes a point of following his own preference is little likely to be popular, and so he will lose on the one hand more than he will gain on the other.

The objection sounds plausible ; it looks almost like being valid, but let us bring it to the test of experience.

Make a list of the names of all the people you know, know with any sort of intimacy, of course, I mean. Then make a desperate effort to be quite honest with yourself, and put a cross against the names of those whom you like best.

I assure you that it will need a desperate effort to do that, for you will find yourself again and again tempted, almost irresistibly, to put that cross opposite the names, not of those whom you really like best, but of those whom you feel you ought to like best, because of their amiable qualities, their unselfishness, or of the gratitude which you feel you owe them for kindnesses and services rendered by them to you in the past.

After you have successfully made that effort you will discover that the persons you have spotted, the persons whom you always meet most gladly, those whose conversation and company are the most inspiring and revivifying, whose very presence raises your spirits when they are low and keeps them up when they are high—are not the men and women who are shining examples of unselfishness, not the sort who may always be counted upon to subordinate their desires and preferences to the preferences and desires of others, even to yours.

And I doubt very much, though this sounds a cynical thing to say, whether they will be those who have made the most sacrifices, great or small, for your sake, or have rendered you services for which a large measure of your gratitude is due.

No ; as I have said, if you have been really honest, the persons upon whom you have bestowed your Cross of the Legion of Honour will be quite likely, to your own surprise, the robust persons, the persons whose very presence exhales not so much sympathy as virility, the persons of strong will, of very decided preferences, and of a very decided habit of following them, the persons who, in all life's mazes and perplexities, take a line of their own, as we say, and stick to it, not over-solicitous as to what other lines it crosses.

These are the persons you will find you would best like to have beside you in times of sickness or of health, of gladness or of sorrow, of peace or of war. These are the popular persons.

Their popularity is not so paradoxical as at first

glance it may appear. These strong souls, who are strong because they follow their preferences, and who follow their preferences because they are strong, are happy people, and happiness is contagious. By just being happy themselves they make you a little happier than you would otherwise be ; and you have the satisfaction of knowing that your gain is by no jot or tittle their loss. When they do anything for you, little or great, you know that in doing it they are not obeying the command of duty or seeking to lay up treasure in heaven, but just pleasing themselves ; and so you can accept that service as freely, as frankly, as it is offered, quit of any little furtive, niggling, annoying sense of obligation.

With the other sort of people, the people with earned reputations for self-sacrifice, who, so far from boldly following their preferences, for the most part suspect and distrust and turn their backs upon them just because they are their preferences, you, if you are of the better sort, never feel altogether at ease. You feel the extreme likelihood that in serving you they are serving what they conceive to be a Higher Purpose—that they are doing a disagreeable thing more or less because it is disagreeable. One must really be a bit of a curmudgeon, you know, to feel anything but discomfort at being made the occasion of disagreeableness to other people.

I once heard a lecturer on ethics tell an audience of schoolboys that they must never omit to take a cold bath in the morning, no matter how bitter the weather or how strong their disinclination ; not because taking a cold bath was a cleanly thing to do, but because it was an unpleasant thing to do, and one could not do better, he said, than begin the day by doing something unpleasant to oneself.

I dare say he was right. But I confess that when any one does something unselfish on my behalf it irks me to feel that he is perhaps regarding me as

that lecturer would have the schoolboy regard the bath.

That liking which we all of us feel instinctively, spontaneously, for those of our fellows who have the habit of following their own preferences, and of not being over-regardful of ours we, in an odd way, carry into our relations with the animal world. I am not quite sure that we all like cats more than we like dogs ; but I am quite sure that we all respect cats more than we respect dogs.

It is true we do not speak of the cat as the " friend of man," or gush about its fidelity. But, insensibly, and scarce knowing why, we treat the cat as a sort of equal and the dog as a sort of slave. We give way to the cat ; we love to hear it purr. And the reason of the difference we make between the two is, I verily and seriously believe, that we sub-consciously recognize in Grimalkin a quality which we would all like to possess in a higher degree than we do, and in Fido a quality which we know we do possess, and deep down in our hearts despise ourselves for possessing.

This difference—shall we say, this moral difference ? —between the creature who single-heartedly follows its own preferences and the one who fawningly watches us to see if haply it may discover ours, the ancient wisdom of Old Egypt recognized and acted upon. It made of the cat a god and of the dog a pariah.

## XX

### DEATH OR THE LADY

I WONDER if any one but myself has noticed—noticed sufficiently to speculate about it, I mean—how great is the number of men who either disappear or commit suicide on the eve of their marriages! From a few figures I have jotted down from time to time, I feel safe in asserting that such cases occur at least once a week. I am pretty certain that they happen very much more often than that, for after all I see only one or two papers daily, and many of these “tragic events,” as the reporters call them, are not recorded in any paper.

The queerest feature of these suicides is that the published account of them ends mostly with the stereotyped sentence, “The unfortunate deceased’s affairs were in good order, and no reason can be assigned for the rash act,” or something of that sort, something to the effect that the only motive for leaving this world the poor fellow had was that if he stayed in it he would be married to-morrow.

And it does seem curious, doesn’t it? Especially curious when we consider what is the common assumption of the state of mind of a man about to claim as his own the adored being in whom all his passions and affections centre. I do not say the ideal view, but just the common assumption—the idea that one takes for granted.

One has a way of regarding the bridegroom expectant as the happiest and most enviable of mankind. Why, he is commonly spoken of as the "happy man." Think of the nice things that poets and song writers have said of him ! He has had, presumably, a certain number of presents given him ; mostly, it is true, they consist of things for which he has no possible use, but still, there they are, portable property if nothing else.

Then he has a new suit of clothes, probably several new suits of clothes. He has also, unless he be a singularly imprudent fellow, a certain amount of free money in his pocket ; and, in immediate prospect, the blissful, the rose-pink honeymoon, sacred theme of romanticists since ever romance was.

No doubt when you come face to face with the thing itself, the actuality, the real man who is to be married to-morrow or the day after, and not the supposititious figure of convention, he usually strikes you as being a fellow creature who is not fully conscious of, or sufficiently thankful for, his manifold and abundant blessings. The joy that is, that must be, in his heart does not show itself in his face or in his manner. He is often nervous, not infrequently grumpy ; and when the supreme moment arrives and he stands, ring in waistcoat pocket, at the altar, he is strangely apt to look thoroughly uncomfortable and ashamed of himself.

But still, if things are with him as they are supposed to be, we may not doubt that these external aspects of the man are mere delusive appearances, and that the soul of him is radiant with joyous expectancy, the heart of him full to bursting with delicious anticipation.

And yet a certain appreciable percentage of his kind goes out and hangs itself the night before ! It seems incredible, but so it is !

Now as sensible people, accustomed to estimate

probabilities upon a basis of ascertained facts, we may take it for granted, I think you will agree, that for every man who actually kills himself or bolts upon the eve of marriage there are at least ten who feel sorely tempted to do so, who would do so if they had the nerve, the pluck, or—the cowardice, if you like to call the thing by a different name.

It takes a good deal to drive a man, a sane man, a man in the full vigour of life, to the rope, the river, the gunsmith's, or the druggist's counter. Think what ills men will support, what hardships they will endure, ere they face the grim finality of death; of death, moreover, in a shape that society has, rightly or wrongly, decided to be shameful. So great are the attractions of living as contrasted with the dread of dying that the common sense of mankind expresses itself in the verdict of the common jury, which almost invariably declares that he who has preferred death to life is of "unsound mind."

Where, then, one man is found willing to die rather than to marry, there must be (I put this to you quite seriously) quite a lot of others who are willing, just willing, to marry rather than to die. Of the two terrible alternatives they choose the least terrible. Looked at by the light of this fact, this unquestionable fact, the figure of the conventional bridegroom becomes changed somewhat, doesn't it? One does not feel quite so certain as one did before that it is so exactly what it seems.

There is something dubious about it, something a little pathetic; yes, a trifle tragic even. "Death before matrimony" really is a tragic cry.

And there is this to be remembered, too, that the alternatives before the prospective but reluctant bridegroom are not strictly Death or the Lady.

There is a third course open, or at any rate assumed to be open—the tergiversating young man may sit down and write a note to the fiancée informing her

that he finds he has mistaken or misunderstood his feelings, and courteously begging her to relieve him of his obligations and to regard him always as a friend if not as a brother. That seems a fairly simple, if a somewhat disquieting, thing to do, and yet—and here we arrive at the gist of what I have to say to-day—rather than do it a good many men die, and a good many others enter upon what they believe will be a future of long-drawn-out misery, certainly for themselves, and in all probability for perfectly innocent and unoffending women.

Why is it, then, that the third and the apparently most easy and obvious of the three possible courses is the one which is most seldom adopted?

The answer is really not difficult to find. Of all our institutions, not even excluding the War Office, the House of Lords and Primogeniture, the Engagement is the most anomalous and irrational, the one which least of all fulfils its presumptive purpose.

If the Engagement means anything it means a period of probation, of trial; the giving of an opportunity to the man and the woman concerned to learn something of one another, to discover the reality and permanence of their feeling each for each. That is what the Engagement sets out, or to be more accurate, should set out to be.

In point of actual fact, of course, it is nothing of the kind. It is a contract as binding, nay more binding, socially, though not legally, than matrimony itself.

A man may break his marriage vows with almost cynical frankness, and socially be none the worse for it—he is received freely wherever he cares to go, welcomed even by the dearest friends of his deceived wife. But he who breaks his engagement is socially done for; the very least of the penalties he has to pay is banishment from the neighbourhood, exile from his most familiar haunts, the cold shoulder of friends, with quite possibly a bully-ragging from the

Bench, and a smart fine at the hands of a jury to follow. He is told that he ought to have known "his own mind," and sympathy unstinted, together with consolation substantial, is dealt out freely to the lady in the case.

Let us admit at once that from her point of view, and as things are, there is a good deal to be said for the existing legal enactment. The probabilities are that a woman who has been engaged right up to within a few weeks or days of her expected marriage has been put to some actual expense; she is money out of pocket over the transaction.

Leaving her injured feelings wholly out of count, too (for one does not quite see how injury to feelings can be estimated in pounds sterling), she has suffered somewhat in estate by the failure of her betrothed to keep to his bond. It is idle to beat about the bush in this matter, or to be squeamish in our terms. To the vast majority of young women to-day marriage is the only profession open; the only source of income, the very guarantee of independence. A marriageable young woman is (I hate to have to say it, but it is true) a marketable article. A marriageable young woman, who has been engaged, and whose engagement has come to grief, is rather less marketable than she was before; she is to some extent damaged goods. She has lost, as they say, a "chance"; some amount of time that might have been devoted to the successful pursuit of another and less elusive husband has been wasted.

This "chance" can be more or less roughly valued in money, and therefore strict justice would seem to demand that in money must the loss be made good. Therefore, you will see I am not here pleading for abolition of actions for breach of promise of marriage. If the over-hasty lover make a mistake let him pay for it by all means; but having paid for it, in common justice and decency let him be free from all other

penalty, punishment, or reprobation of any sort whatever.

Now, let us look at the matter from the standpoint of the man, of the man who, after all, must be allowed to have a certain vested interest in his own future. Before he becomes engaged he ought to know his "own mind," it is said; and it sounds plausible, almost convincing.

But surely "mind," in this case, depends entirely on the character, the temperament, the mental and moral qualities generally, of the woman whom he proposes to make his wife.

To consider a possible instance. John's mind on Monday might be to marry Jane. But on Thursday he might come upon her in the act of torturing a cat, say, or violently spanking and otherwise ill-using her little brother for some trifling childish naughtiness, or flirting outrageously with Thomas. Then, unless John be so over head and ears in love as to have parted with all control of his reason and judgment, he will be of a very different mind as to the delights which life-long union with Jane holds out to him.

But it is just this opportunity of seeing Jane in her more intimate relations that the Engagement and the Engagement only, offers him. Even so it is a poor opportunity, for the chances are that Jane will be at her sweetest when John is about.

Previous to the Engagement his opportunities are so meagre as practically to have no existence. After the Engagement, though he may know his own mind right enough, it is too late for him to let Jane or Jane's father and friends know it. He has either to commit suicide, to break his engagement and to be cut by his acquaintances, or to join himself for life to, and to give to his children a mother who is a cat torturer, a virago, or a wanton *in posse*. For, let us remember this, both law and custom insist that the sole valid

ground for the breaking of an Engagement is positive and proven in chastity in the woman.

Now, when we get outside law and custom, and come to common sense, it becomes plain to the meanest intelligence that in chastity is not by any means the only justification for the rupture of a betrothal.

There are dozens of others—acute differences of taste, deficiencies of temper, mental incompatibilities, to name no more ; and for these to become discernible there needs a certain amount of intimacy, an intimacy less than that of marriage, more than that of mere acquaintance. It is not too much to say that not one man in a thousand of the upper and middle classes (on lower social planes the arrangements are much more rational, human, and satisfactory) knows anything that is worth knowing, anything that should be known, of the girl to whom he makes an offer of marriage.

To him she is a confection of frills and laces, of drawing-rooms and garden-parties, of walks from church, not a human being of passions and tastes, of will and temperament. More often than not the first quarter of an hour he has ever spent alone with her is that in which he takes the irrevocable step—remember it is the proposal that is the irrevocable step.

Of course, if the nature of woman were crystalline, if woman could be seen into and through at a casual glance, why then one might know one's "own mind" about her more readily, but—well—woman is not crystalline. One does not want to say more than that.

Surely, surely no man in his senses would enter upon an ordinary commercial partnership knowing so little of his partner as the average man knows of the woman to whom he engages himself, and yet partnerships are for seven years or terminable at will. And then one does not have to sit opposite one's

partner at breakfast, or to live with him in seaside lodgings for a month or so in every year.

But, you may reply, a man in love is not in his senses ! Quite so. Then why when he is in his senses hold him so strictly to a contract that he made when he was out of them ?

A year or so ago, on the initiative of our most eminent man of letters, a cry went forth, and was echoed in some unexpected quarters, for terminable marriage. Mr. George Meredith was a trifle over-precipitous ; his was the impatience of an old man in a hurry. It will be time enough to discuss terminable marriage when we have discussed and established rational Engagements ; Engagements that may be ended with the minimum of friction, with nothing at all of obloquy.

Perhaps we might cease to call them Engagements ; we might give to them some name that would imply probation rather than finality. Perhaps the Germans could supply us with one of their nice compound words, an English equivalent of “ The-Time-in-which-Two-People - are - allowed - to - discover - whether-they-really-care-for-each-other-and-are-really-suited-to-each-other-or-not.” I suggest this, and I suggest it having no personal interest in the matter whatever. I am not engaged.

Sometimes—but there !

1905.

## XXI

### THE MATCH-MAKER

“ A LADY wishes to see you, sir.”

I slammed down my book with some irritation, I am afraid. It is always a little disturbing to a man, even the most conscientious and austere of men, to be told suddenly that a lady wishes to see him. I don't quite know why this should be so, and I haven't time to search out the causes of it now. It is a sort of inherited instinct, I suspect, like that which impels the youngest and most inexperienced mouse to scamper away from the smallest kitten. I suspect we have all of us had ancestors who had good reason to be upset when unexpected ladies wished to see them, and they have handed down their tremors to us—their innocent offspring.

“ Name ? ” I asked.

“ Mrs. Wodgett, sir ; and, please, she told me to say that she has not called about any subscription to anything.”

I concluded at once that my caller must be a cleverish woman. There was nothing for it but to see her, I decided, and I put aside my book, a very remarkable book called “ Sex and Character,” the work of a young German who left this world by his own act at the age of three-and-twenty, but not before he had written a thick volume telling women exactly what he thought of them.

A moment later Mrs. Wodgett stood in the doorway. I glanced at her curiously, but one keen glance was enough to assure me that I had never seen her before, or at any rate had never known her before. Women do alter beyond all recognizing in twenty years or so, but still this lady, I felt sure, in no way belonged to my past.

There was nothing remarkable about her ; she was just a woman of the well-to-do middle class somewhere, I guessed, in the early forties ; stoutish, pleasant-looking, with a whimsical expression about the mouth and eyes.

I don't know in the least how she was dressed, but since nothing about her apparel impressed me I presume she must have been dressed well.

I asked her to sit down ; she did sit down, and then I made myself look as much like a note of interrogation as possible.

She replied promptly to the unspoken question.

"I have come," she began, "to give you a good talking-to."

"Will it last long ?" I asked, trying to look resigned. "It is not that I shouldn't be delighted to listen for ever and ever," I added, "but you see . . ." I pointed to my table with its litter of papers and to my book lying open, face downwards, on a chair.

"That depends," she said ; "that depends entirely upon how you take it. If you take it lying down it will be over in about twenty minutes. If you take it fighting, why then . . . !"

"I will compromise. I will take it sitting," I said.

"Well then," she started off, "listen. I have been for many years a reader of your articles . . ."

"Stop !" I cried. "Now I know you are going to say something disagreeable. That is the way my correspondents always begin their letters when they are going to find fault and to make themselves generally unpleasant."

“Now didn’t I tell you,” she laughed, “that I was going to give you a good talking-to? That usually means more criticism than compliment, doesn’t it? However, it is a sort of compliment that I should even want to give you a talking-to, isn’t it? I don’t bother myself to dress down the Dicks, Toms, and Harrys of journalism, I can assure you. But you are different . . .”

I bowed.

“Yes; I recognize that the sort of thing you write, and the way in which you write it, is likely to have an influence. Lately I have come to the conclusion that it is likely to have a bad influence, especially upon young men and young women. So I am here.”

“Pardon me one moment,” I interrupted. “The servant gave me your name as Wodgett. Is it possible that she blundered? Is it not Grundy, by chance?”

“Oh, dear no,” she laughed again, a mocking but not an unpleasant laugh. “Mrs. Grundy is one of my dearest friends, but I am not she. She and I do not altogether agree. I sometimes think she goes a little too far in certain directions. But still, she is most estimable. She is a great and a beneficent influence. She has a large family of daughters and nieces.”

“And of sons and nephews,” I added. “And she manages to get most of them on the County Council, doesn’t she?”

“Quite true,” she agreed. “How clever of you to guess. They try to keep it dark at election time, you know. Oh, yes, on the County Councils, and on the magisterial bench, and even in Parliament. It is the Grundy family on the County Council who have just been censoring the children’s library, and removing such books as ‘Vanity Fair’ and ‘Dombey and Son’ and ‘Peter Simple.’”

“You don’t say so?” I exclaimed. “Why, how

absurd ! I was brought up on Dickens and Thackeray and Marryat."

"Ah ! Perhaps that accounts," she nodded quizzically. "But it is you I want to talk about," she went on. "Lately you have taken to saying things about marriage ; things I don't like at all, things that are calculated to deter young people, particularly young men, from thinking kindly of that institution ; things that might even make them afraid to venture upon it."

"One moment, Mrs. Wodgett," I said sternly. "Are those things you complain of true things or false things ?"

"Excuse me, sir," she replied with some tartness, "but truth and falsehood have nothing to do with the matter."

"Madam !" I almost shouted, and I started so violently that I thrust back my chair some foot or so farther from her. "Madam, I don't want to speak hastily or offensively, but it seems to me you are a most immoral woman !"

"Be calm," she said placidly. "My morality or immorality need not affect you in any way. You are quite safe. I repeat that this is not a question of truth or falsehood. In a case like this, the greater the truth the greater the harm done."

I was going to retort "Jesuit," but I reflected that to do that would show ignorance and stupidity, so I held my tongue, and she continued :

"Supposing I were to admit, as I do not, that everything you have been saying about the married life were true ; even then I should tell you that you are wrong to say it. Supposing a fellow-creature is face to face with a choice of evils. Is it wise or kind, do you think, to try to persuade the poor thing that the lesser of the two evils is worse than it really is ? Surely it were better to let him take it, and then find out the bad side of it, if there be one, for himself. Better, I

mean, than to frighten him into taking the greater of the two evils ? ”

“ Really, my dear lady, this is the merest question-begging,” I protested.

“ Not at all,” she returned. “ I am speaking from the woman’s point of view, of course—and it’s an important one, mind ; for it’s that of just half humanity. I tell you that in the world as it is now it is better for a woman to be married than not to be married, even if marriage were all you say.”

“ Better have a bad husband than none, eh ? ”

“ Well, that’s a hard saying, but it’s almost true,” she went on. “ Better a baddish husband than none, certainly. After all, the marriage laws are pretty favourable to women. If a husband’s downright bad a wife can get rid of him, and still compel him to keep her in comfort. If he’s only indifferent good, she learns to put up with him ; she has compensations, her children, her house, her position in society. She gets consideration where an unmarried woman gets none. She’s not looked upon as, and doesn’t feel herself to be, a failure anyhow. You go and tell her that she’ll lose romance. Romance ! Rubbish, I say. What good did romance ever do a woman yet ? You say marriage takes the fine edge off life. Rubbish again ! What’s the use of a fine edge except to cut your fingers all the more easily ? All a sensible woman wants of life is reasonable comfort, assured position and security when her charms shall have faded. If honest love remains too, so much the better, but she can manage to get along all right without it, if the worst comes to the worst.”

“ I see,” I said. “ Then you do agree with me after all—that women do get more out of marriage than men do ? ”

“ Of course I do,” she admitted, “ but I want you to stop saying it. Why, it’s marriage or nothing for most women, and it’ll be nothing presently if you go

on scaring the men as you do. Let me tell you frankly. There's nothing a woman hates and dreads as she does the idea of having to earn her own living. She may deny it, but don't believe her. Besides, in nine cases out of ten she can't do it. Look here, I have four daughters all unmarried—thanks to people like you—and there's not one of them could earn more than a pound a week or so if she were put to it."

"Surely," I queried, "that's the fault of their parents, of their upbringing?"

"Not in the least," she replied. "It's the fault of the way the world's made; the way in which it pays women. Who will employ a woman at the same wages as he pays a man? But supposing a girl can just earn her living. What then? What prospect is there for her? To grow old in loneliness. To be looked down upon all her life by the other women who have secured husbands. To have no interests in life, no interests of children and home and husband and grandchildren, nothing but just work, work, work, until she drops. And besides . . ."

"Well?"

"Oh, well, it's different for men, of course. Married or unmarried they can do . . . all sorts of things without getting hurt. I can hardly go into that side of the question, even with you, but you know quite well what I mean. If a man decides to remain single for all, or the best part of his life, he is not compelled to starve the whole of one side of his nature as a woman is. But there, one can't speak plainly about these things, as you know."

"I do. But do me the justice to admit that I at least have always spoken as plainly as I have dared, and that I have done my best to persuade editors and others who sit in the seats of the mighty to let me speak more plainly still. But talking of justice, don't you think you are just the least little bit in the world unjust to me? I have never attacked marriage as an

institution. I have never proposed to abolish it . . . only to alter it a trifle. In the matter of marriage I am a Liberal reformer, not an anarchist."

"Nonsense!" She stamped her foot. "You know quite well that you can't alter it unless you alter pretty nearly everything else at the same time, including human nature. All you can do is to set a certain number of men against it, and so spoil the lives of a certain number of women who might have been reasonably happy. Take your suggestion last week, for instance—about married people seeing not so much of each other, not being able to make sure of each other. That implies, I suppose, that they should live in different houses and call on each other sometimes as friends do. That might be all right, I admit, if it could be managed. I'll go so far as to say it would be all right. But how can it be managed? How many men can afford to keep two houses going? Most of them have more than enough to do to keep one. And then the possible children! In which house are they to live? And what about jealousy? The husband never knowing who was calling on his wife, and the wife making pretty shrewd guesses as to who was calling on her husband! Oh, what an unpractical man you are. I feel I could shake you!"

"I don't fancy you could," I laughed. "I weigh over twelve stone. But I am unpractical; I own up to that. Practicality is not a writer's business; he must leave that to politicians. All a writer can do is to sow ideas about broadcast and trust to some of them falling upon fertile soil."

"How if he sow tares with the good grain?" she asked, with a humorous twitch of the lips.

"The Scripture answers you," I replied. "'Let both grow together until the harvest,' you remember."

"Neat," she said smiling, "but you know who it is that is said to quote Scripture rather aptly. The only harvest likely to come of your ideas is a crop of selfish

pigs of men and wretched women. But it's kind of you to have listened so patiently. Good-bye. No, don't ring, I can find my way out."

"No, no, that you shall not do," I said, following her.

When I got back to my room, perhaps a man a little bit wiser, if also a little bit sadder, I picked up my book, and letting my eyes fall at random on the page at which it opened, I read this :

"Match-making is essentially the phenomenon of all others which gives us the key to the nature of woman, and we must not, as has always been the case, merely acknowledge the fact and pass on, but we should try to analyze and explain it. One of our commonest phrases runs : 'Every woman is a match-maker.'

"But we must remember that in this, and nothing else, lies the actual essence of woman. After mature consideration of the most varied types of women, and with due regard to the special classes besides those I have discussed, I am of opinion that the only positively general female characteristic is that of match-making ; that is, her uniform willingness to further the idea of marriage."

1906.

## XXII

### FINE FEATHERS

I SQUARED my shoulders, held up my chin, and tried to look much more self-possessed and confident than I felt as I stood on her doorstep in the November easterly drizzle waiting for the door to be opened and the fateful answer given—at home, or not at home. For, truth to tell, I was not at all sure that in calling on her I had not been guilty of almost the greatest sin a man can commit against a charming woman—the offence of indiscretion.

Experience has taught me that a woman will forgive a man almost anything but being where and when he is not wanted, or seeing or hearing things which it is undesirable that he should hear or see.

I had caught a passing glimpse of her in a hansom the day before in the Western end of Oxford Street, and the sight of her in London had surprised and slightly intrigued me, for I happened to know that she was supposed to be in Yorkshire until near Christmas, and that her husband was in Scotland.

But dullness drives one to deeds of desperation, and November in London is dull beyond words. All the people one never wants to meet are back, and those without whom life is a desert are still in the country. This lady was one of those without whom life is a desert, and naturally, when I so unexpectedly caught sight of her, I saw a chance of at least one delicious

hour in an oasis. So the next day, after a couple of hours' hard wrestling with temptation, I yielded and called at her London house.

She was at home, and, I was relieved to discover, not at all annoyed but only a bit surprised to see me.

"You must be a magician, or a sensitive, or something creepy of that sort," she said. "You seem to know where I am by a kind of sixth sense. I never told a soul I was coming up this week, and I did tell you quite definitely that I should be away until the middle of December. How on earth did you know I was here?"

"Oh, there's nothing a bit mystical about it," I assured her. "I have the eyes of a man, you know, and they can penetrate the obscurity even of a London fog, the dirty window of a hansom, and a white gauze veil."

"Yes," she cried enlightened, "I might have remembered what a ubiquitous creature you are. Wherever one happens to be in London you are certain to be there too. But I did think a November mist, a thickish veil, and a swift hansom would have beaten even you."

"Tell me at once if I am indiscreet," I implored, "and I will not even sit down. I will vanish instantly, and this shall be as though it had never been."

"Indiscreet! Don't be absurd. You always believe the worst."

"Well, I generally find I come out right."

"Anyhow you're wrong this time, as you always are when you believe anything but the best of me. I have run up for a few days shopping and to see my dressmaker. Now you know the whole shameful secret. There are a lot of people, quite smart people, coming to Haigh Hall for the first week in December, there's to be a big dance, some theatricals, and all sorts of larks, and I suddenly found I hadn't a rag to put on!"

My eyes wandered over her violet velvet tea-gown, with its grey-brown fur, and its clay-coloured lace, wandered upwards from the hem of it till they rested on her red hair gleaming darkly in the firelight.

"Not a rag," I repeated.

"Oh, this!" she said, as she might have spoken had she been wearing a potato sack. "Well, one must be decent you know, even when one's alone in London. You wouldn't have me . . ."

"No, I wouldn't," I interrupted. "I beg you to believe that I wouldn't. But I'm so glad we've got on to the question of women's extrav . . . women's dress let us call it, because that's been rather on my mind lately, and now I can have it out with a woman who is really extrav . . . I mean who, well who does spend a good deal on frocks."

"On your mind," she repeated. "Women's dress? Why, whose bill is it? . . . But there, I don't want to be indiscreet either. No, I won't believe the worst. There!"

"Thank you," I replied. "Let us assume that we're both toy lambs to-day. And now to the point. I was talking last week to an observant and philosophical Oriental, a little Jap fellow, Akakura. . . . I rather think you've met him, and I tried to score a point off Japanese civilization by mentioning the institution of the Geisha. Whereupon the little beast retorted on me that so far as he could see all our women were amateur Geishas. That the Geishas were paid to amuse and attract men, and that that was just what all our women did without pay. They dressed for men, they talked for men, they danced for men, that the whole object of their existence was to attract men. I confess that, as he put it it sounded uncommonly like the truth, but of course . . ."

"It is the truth," she said. "Of course I know little Akak; he's always right in these matters. But

how shouldn't it be the truth? What else should we dress for?"

"You stagger me," I returned. "But—but I have always heard it said that women dress to make other women envious, not . . ."

"Quite true, but to make them envious of what? Not of the dress itself, but of the effect it has upon you. So it comes to the same thing, doesn't it?"

"But it doesn't have any effect upon us," I protested, "except perhaps rather to frighten us," I added. "I assure you I—and I don't think I'm exceptional—never know how a woman's dressed. The more she attracts me the less I know what she's got on. Why just now I should never have noticed that violet velvet, that lace, that fur, if it hadn't been for that preposterous remark of yours about not having a rag."

"That is what you think," she laughed, as though what I thought was of no consequence whatever. "At least you may think it—I don't know—but it is not the fact. Suppose when you came in just now I had been wearing a commonplace skirt, an ugly blouse, and my hair had been screwed up in a knob behind; you'd have looked horrified, have made some lying excuse to get away, and been half-way to Piccadilly by this time."

"You imply then that I came here, that I'm staying here, just to look at a velvet gown, at some fur, and a little lace, the pattern of which I can't even see in this dim light!"

"No, you're not staying for the gown, nor for the woman, but for the woman *and* the gown; for the total impression which woman and gown make together. See?"

In common honesty I had to acknowledge to myself that it was so, but I acknowledged it only to myself. I kept silence.

"I often wonder," I said presently, "what there is

in men or in their admiration that makes it worth a woman's while to spend so much money on them."

"Well, you see, they don't as a rule spend their own money," she replied, "but mostly their husband's or their father's money; some one else's, anyhow. But still, you know, one does not need to value the admirer in order to value his admiration. That's one of the paradoxes of life, isn't it? Just as we do care what people say while we don't care a bit about the people. I often hear authors declare that they don't care a bit what the reviewers think of them. But they one and all take precious good care to subscribe to a press-cutting agency so that they may see what the reviewers think as soon as possible. It is the same with actors, with painters, yes, even with preachers, with every sort of artist. Now every woman is an artist of sorts, and her work of art is herself. Naturally, therefore, she wants to capture the critics for it, to win admiration for it. When she does she is a success; when she doesn't she is a failure. Why, I often spend more time and thought over a toilette than you do, I have no doubt, over an article."

"And you have your reward," I said tartly. "I don't find men come buzzing about my articles to any extent."

"Perhaps you're not so good an artist as I?"

"Or the materials are less attractive to begin with," I suggested. "But you know," I went on, "I don't think we've quite got to the bottom of it yet. I don't think it was mere artistry that brought you up to London in the middle of November."

"Well, have the whole truth then," she said, "which is that men are women's—most women's—whole world. Women are seldom or never men's whole world. You like to win women's admiration, of course, but you like to win something else besides, and more. You like to win men's admiration, too, for your books, your speeches, your pictures, your business

capacity, or this, that, or the other thing that you do in the world. We have only you. What the applauding house is to the actor, what the crowd round his picture in the Academy is to the artist, what the spell-bound audience is to the orator, the men 'buzzing round,' as you call it, are to a woman.

"Just remember what it is to a girl. . . . No, I forgot, you can't do that. You have been most things, but you haven't been a girl. . . . Well, try to imagine, then, what it is to a girl at a dance, say, who doesn't get many partners, who has to sit out and sit out alone. She is humiliated into the dust by a desolating sense of failure. She wishes she had never been born. I don't believe anything that can happen to a man ever can make him feel like that. She feels worse than the actor feels when the stalls yawn at him and the pit and gallery guy him; she feels like throwing her arms around and hugging the most objectionable man in the room if he comes up and asks her to dance with him."

"I see; and she puts it all down to her ill-fitting or otherwise unattractive frock, I suppose?"

"Often she does, and she's generally right," she agreed. "Let me give you a case in point. Last year I had a girl staying with me, the daughter of a country parson. She's not a bad-looking little mouse of a thing, and her mother, the female parson, has neither the money nor the sense to dress her properly. Well, I took her to a dance one night. I didn't know what sort of frock she'd wear, and was horrified when I saw what she did wear. She looked as dowdy as a charity school girl, and the way she had done her hair was repulsive. Poor little beast, she had the most awful time. I had positively to drive men up to her by threats, by . . ."

"Oh, I understand."

"She wept on my bosom on the way home in the carriage, and I then and there determined it should

be made up to her, cost what it might. So I gave a dance at my own house here, and for that dance I dressed her myself. It did cost a lot, but I did it regardless. I thought out every detail of her costume. I ransacked the flower shops to get her the exactly right flowers. I . . . well you may as well have the whole story. . . . I did something artistic with a hare's foot and a rouge pot. Result—the child went about the ballroom in a blaze of triumph. Men, old dodderers and young idiots, as well as the really nice men, my special men, elbowed each other to get hold of her card to scribble their names on it. They came bothering me for introductions to the 'little beauty,' as they called her. Why! . . . Of course . . . now I remember you were there and you . . ."

"Stop," I cried. "Confound it," I spluttered. "I beg your pardon, but really don't tell me that lovely little thing was just so much frillery and carmine."

"No," she mocked. "There was just a tiny little bit of girl inside the frillery and underneath the carmine. A tiny little bit of girl which if you'd met it at breakfast that very morning or before my maid and I had done with it you wouldn't have looked at twice. So you see!"

"And what became of that hedge-sparrow in kingfisher's plumage?" I asked. "How did that small impostor feel when the fine feathers came off?"

"Oh, she was all right," she said. "She got engaged that night, in the conservatory. She's married now to young Diveson. She's awfully nice to me. She lends us her box at Covent Garden whenever we like. She dresses splendidly."

I was speechless.

"But even if she hadn't captured a rich man the principle of the thing would have remained the same," she went on. "No conqueror entering a captured city could feel the joy of life more intensely than that

kid felt from the moment she entered the ballroom. Old Campbell Whatsisname won't feel anything like as triumphant when the King sends for him to form a government. So you see it is worth while spending a lot of money on frocks, isn't it ? ”

“ All the same, and with every disposition to think the most of my sex, I do think that men's admiration is a pretty poor thing to make life's aim,” I objected.

“ When even a pretty poor thing is all one can get one goes for it,” she said.

1905.

## XXIII

### IF I WERE A WOMAN

A CORRESPONDENT has been asking our editor "if the writer, 'Hubert,' of the *Sunday Chronicle*, is a woman," and our editor, evidently having some doubts upon the subject himself, has sent the query on to me. When I first received it I was a little puzzled; first, to imagine how any dubiety as to my sex could have arisen, secondly as to whether I ought to take such dubiety as a delicate compliment or as a smack in the face. I don't know why, probably quite without good reason, but I have, from the very earliest age, cherished and petted the conviction that I was a particularly and peculiarly masculine person. I had my first love-affair at the age of eight (I have forgotten her name, but I still have a lively recollection of her side-spring boots and white stockings), and a year later I adventured upon my first cigar. At ten I fought a prolonged battle with a drummer boy in the Royal Welsh Regiment, and, although it is true the credit of the British infantry was well maintained, I left my mark on the red-coated lad's honest face. At twelve I was formally engaged to the most charming of her sex. At eighteen I was within a few hours of fighting a duel with one of the best swordsmen of Bonn University, a duel which failed to come off only because I chose pistols, and my friend (we were enemies but for about twelve hours) stood firm for the sabre.

Since I attained my majority there has never been a moment when I have not been indebted to a West End tailor. There are some other little matters I could mention, but these I will leave to be published after my death. On the whole, on thinking the matter over quietly and impartially, I could find no grounds whatever for our correspondent's curious speculation. Then a sudden thought came to me which gave me pause, and suggested that perhaps "F. C.," of Liverpool, might have something to say for himself, after all. I remembered that a year or two ago, when Palmistry was the fashionable craze in London drawing-rooms, I had had my character read and my fortune told by a charming young lady, who professed occult knowledge of the human hand. She was a fascinating little person, and it was impossible to be sceptical as to her mysterious powers. Indeed, she put them beyond all doubt by telling me certain things about myself which nobody but myself could know. For instance, she said that I had been cruelly used by a fair woman! That was true enough, heaven knows, and how my heart leaped when she said it, for I was afraid lest, before a room full of people, she would go on to mention all the other fifteen fair women who in the course of my career have played the very devil with me (reference to old diaries shows me that up to the end of 1895 there had been sixteen of them, and no fewer than five were called "Flossie"). The lady exercised a kind reticence as to these others, but I could see by a queer look in her eyes that she knew all about them. Then she told me that I was "capable of deep affection," and that I was "fonder of spending than of earning money." After these two inspirations of hers I was prepared implicitly to believe anything else she said. Finally she took hold of my right hand, bent and twisted the fingers, and ended by remarking in a far-off sort of voice that I had "a great deal of the true womanly" in my nature. Now

that being so (and the young Cheiromant having been right about all these other matters, was probably not wrong about this), there may, it seems to me, be some excuse for our correspondent. As I endeavour to make my articles what some great critic has said all literature ought to be, "a revelation of personality," it is more than likely that some of my true womanliness finds its way into these columns. And so I forgive "F. C.," of Liverpool.

But was his doubt a compliment or a flout? That's another pair of sleeves. I still felt a bit uneasy on that point, and I lighted the biggest pipe I possess, and sat down by the fire in my armchair to think it over. It has been said that while there is no woman who has not at some time wished herself a man, there is no man who has ever wished himself a woman; and that seems to suggest that it is better to be born a boy, if one can persuade one's mother to take a reasonable view of the matter. But, then, on the other hand, speaking entirely for myself, I confess I have always greatly preferred women to men. They are nicer to look at and to talk to, it seems to me. They generally have better complexions, and they always wear prettier clothes. Most of those that I know do nothing at all for their livings; they are content merely to exist beautifully, thus realizing, apparently without the slightest effort, my own highest aspiration, my own loftiest ideal. They never lose their tempers. They always keep appointments. They rarely say ill-natured or spiteful things of each other, as we men do, and they can always quite safely be trusted with the most sacred secret. All these may strike you as small and unimportant matters, but, taken altogether, they go a long way towards making up the sum of human happiness. I don't know how other men feel about it, but for my part I would rather drive about in a

hansom cab with a dairymaid than with a duke ; and if I were to be exiled for the rest of my life to some island in the Pacific Ocean with only one companion I am certain I should choose that one companion from the other sex. So, finally, I came to the conclusion that it was paying a pretty compliment to a man to ask him if he were not a woman !

Then, perhaps because the pipe was somewhat strong, the fire a little over warm, and there was no organ grinder within a hundred yards of the garden gate, the pensive, speculative mood came upon me, the mood in which one loves to picture the improbable, to sigh for the unattainable. I began to wonder what I really should do if I were a woman. Just at that moment the thing did not seem quite so beyond possibility as it does at this. There is really no saying, I thought ; one dare not set limits to Science, Almighty Science, which has conferred upon mankind Gower Street Station and the Dum-Dum bullet. Suppose—I went on with the fancy—at some not distant date some chemical mixture should be discovered by taking three dessert-spoonfuls daily of which for a month or so the transformation of sex could be accomplished. I feel sure I should take that drug, for in the matter of drugs I am by way of being adventurous. I have taken opium in all its forms, I have eaten haschish, and soothed my sorrows with Indian hemp. I know by experience that, as the advertisements truly say, “kola is not a food.” I have chewed betel nut, and experimented with rare and curious Eastern poisons. Yes, I should buy a bottle of that chemical mixture, buy it at the Stores, where the two-and-sixpenny size would be sold for one-and-ninepence, and then—If I were a woman !

Of course, I should be young and beautiful. Youth, nature would provide, to start with, at least ; beauty,

art would accomplish. It is only the stupid women who are plain ; only the idiots who are downright ugly. I have spent much time in looking into the windows of West End modistes, and I have learned that a fine figure is within easy reach of a reasonably well-filled purse. Even as a man I have no objection on principle to rouge and pearl powder ; as a woman with a poor complexion I should consider the use of them my right, nay, more, my duty. The adage, the melancholy adage, that "beauty is only skin deep," must have been made in a barbarous age, in an age before there were perfumers' shops in Old Bond Street or the Rue de la Paix. Beauty need not be so deep as the skin nowadays. One washes off the beauty and then one comes to the skin. Being young and beautiful, I should naturally have lots of money. A woman, young, beautiful, and poor is a living libel upon her sex. The literary impulse is so strong in me that I doubt if any chemical mixture that Science could compound would be potent to eradicate it, and so, even if I were a woman, I think I should write for the press. I should put on my prettiest frock, and go to call on editors. There is a good deal of human nature about editors, and I have noticed that while a mere man is not infrequently informed by the office boy that Mr. So-and-so is out and not expected back before five o'clock, a woman, young, beautiful, and smartly dressed, is generally admitted straight-way to the innermost. Once let me get face to face with an editor, and, be he as old as humbug, and as virtuous as a County Council candidate, he would need to be more than human to reject my MSS. or to refuse to pay for them at ever so much more per thousand words than he would give to a nasty man. Not only so, but I rather think he would take me out to luncheon and order champagne, without a qualm at the thought that his wife and daughters at home were drinking cheap claret. If I were a woman I

should not trouble my conscience much about men's wives and daughters.

There's a good deal to be got out of editors by a woman *qui connaît son monde*, as the French say. Editors have tickets for theatres and concerts and flower shows and other functions that it costs a pretty penny to go to. Also, if one is by way of being a notoriety, even of the humblest sort, the insertion of any number of puff paragraphs is the reward of one's amiability to a bewitched editor. Then, if I were a woman who wrote, I should not bother to write correct grammar, or to struggle with the difficulties of the English tongue. One no more expects a woman to know the right uses of the subjunctive, or how to handle aptly the infinitive mood, than one looks for her to captain a county team at "Rugger," or to speak the truth when the truth is inconvenient. Indeed, slipshod English and an occasional lapse into the simpler forms of slang give rather a charm than otherwise to a woman's writings. They make the reader conceive of her as a trifle kittenish, playful, an "agreeable rattle," as Disraeli had it.

Then if I were a woman, oh! I would write about dress! All my life long I have yearned and agonized to do the fashion article for a sixpenny weekly, and so far I have never found an editor who would trust me with the job. The subject of women's dress is as exhaustless as it is exhilarating. I could linger lovingly for columns over tea-gowns, I could work myself up to a lofty height of impassioned enthusiasm about toques, and I could say such scathing things anent the Russian blouse. My article on "Garter *versus* Suspender" would electrify London and drive English femininity into two hostile camps. The literary charm of dress is that it lends itself to such pretty phrases, such pretty French phrases, that

sound as though they might mean something nice to eat. Take for instance, these two: "A ravishing *confection de mousseline d'Inde* with *coquilles de dentelles de Malines*," and "the *escalopes de homard en turban* were perfection." Now who, unacquainted with the French tongue, could say which of these referred to the entrancing toilette and which to the seductive dish? A true man of letters loves delicious words for their own sake; and, alas! only a woman gets a chance of using such very delicious words as a well-written fashion article demands.

But writing, after all, is more or less serious. It is the lighter pleasures of life that are really important; and it would be to those, if I were a woman, that I should devote most thoughtful consideration. Woman's realm is the realm of the heart and the afternoon tea-table, not of the brain and the intelligence. It is hers to bewitch man, not to convince him. The greatest women of history, the women who have set nations by the ears and undone Empires, have worked their wills by enthralling men's senses, not by dominating their intellects. An upward glance from beneath Cleopatra's dark lashes made Antony her captive; a winning smile of Mary of Scotland brought the rapiers ringing from their scabbards. Lady Jane Grey, we are told, was a clever young woman, and played chess uncommonly well; but then Lady Jane Grey suffered check-mate quite early in the game, and had remarkably little to show for it. If I were a woman I should engage in the duel of sex, take a hand in the game of love, as often as opportunity offered. But I think I should select my victims from among the married men of my acquaintance. In the first place the married man is, generally speaking, better off than the bachelor, and a hard-up admirer is as discreditable to a woman as soiled gloves or as

a hole in her stocking. Then a married man must needs, unless he be quite a fool, have learned something of the ways a woman likes in a lover. But his chief claim lies in the fact that, by the very act of marriage, he has given hostages to silence, and can mostly be trusted to hold his own tongue and to burn her letters. The gay young bachelor is a trifle given to boastfulness, and to letting drop unguarded hints, which, picked up and pieced together, may serve as a weapon of destruction to the most carefully made reputation.

Mention of reputation suggests another question to my mind. If I were a woman should I practise prudence ; should I try to earn, I won't say to merit, but to earn, the approval of Mrs. Grundy and her eligible grown-up daughters ? There is much to be said for it, for that worthy old person is still a power in Philistia, wherein, I suppose, I should mostly dwell. My own feelings towards her are like those of the eighteenth-century philosophers towards religion. They didn't believe in it themselves, but they thought it a capital thing for the uneducated masses. Therefore, I think I should always treat her deferentially—while she was looking. One never knows when one may need a certificate of character ; and there are critical moments when the marriage lines themselves are scarce more important than Mrs. Grundy's good word. I think I should cultivate religion, too, in an amateurish sort of way ; for I remember the incomparable Heine said that a beautiful woman without religion is like a fair flower devoid of perfume ; and I fancy the nicest, the very nicest, men share his view. I should not be “advanced.” I might now and then be forward, but I should never be advanced. I should not wear knickerbockers (at least, not obviously), or clamour for a vote, or advocate out-of-the-way

views about marriage. Pioneers, proverbially, have an unpleasant time, and I regard the world as a place to be comfortable in. A soldier friend of mine once told me how, in an attack upon a fortress, he and his men had crossed the deep ditch over the bodies of their comrades, who had fallen in the first assault. He seemed to think it very brave and daring, but I said, "How about the fellows who filled up the ditch with their bodies?" No, no, I would let my advanced and adventurous sisters fill up the ditch; then, when the Promised Land has been captured, I would drive quietly over in a hansom, in a hansom with india-rubber tyres.

The end of my meditation was that I found myself regretting that "F. C.," of Liverpool, was wrong in his surmise, and that the writer "Hubert," of the *Sunday Chronicle*, is not a woman. For the writer "Hubert" has had a hard time of it on the whole. He has toiled long and caught nothing to speak of; he has acquired many more kicks than halfpence. It is true he has warmed both hands at the fire of life, but he has burnt his fingers badly more than once. He is an unappreciated, a misunderstood man, and he has been forced reluctantly to the conclusion that the world is not a good place for good men. Their hope is in the world to come. Meanwhile this world is the best of all worlds for women—and cats.

1898.

## XXIV

### THE FAITH I HOLD \*

#### I

I REGRET extremely that when I recall to memory those of my experiences which accompanied my inquiry into, and my acceptance of, the Socialist view of life, I am wholly unable to trace in them that coherent and connected movement, that inevitable step-by-measured-step forward, in short that strictly logical progression which seems to have marked and distinguished the advance from darkness into light of most of my predecessors in this course of lectures.

When, for example, at the first of them, I sat here and listened enthralled to Mrs. Sidney Webb, I seemed to be following the progress of some disembodied spirit moving serenely through an unresistant ether; some pure intelligence free of all emotions, untrammelled even by the prepossessions and prejudices which hamper and hinder the development of the ordinary human intellect.

Scarcely less envious was I of the other of my fellow members who followed Mrs. Webb, and who seem to have been gifted in their cradles by a Fairy Socialist

\* Being one of a series of six papers, all under this title, read before the Fabian Society in 1907. The other five lecturers were Mrs. Sidney Webb, Dr. Stanton Coit, Mr. S. G. Hobson, the Rev. R. J. Campbell, and Mr. H. G. Wells.

god-mother with temperaments and intelligences that unerringly disposed them to turn from error and to pursue truth, to pursue it without misgivings, without any lookings and longings back. Indeed, one effect of this course of lectures upon me has been to incline me towards a belief in the doctrine of Election and Predestination, and to force upon me the disturbing conviction that I only of the six confessors was born with the usual amount of original sin, and without the more than equivalent set-off of divine grace, or whatever may be the neo-theological or Socialist synonym for it.

Not that I was ever a contented Philistine—let me at least say that for myself. I was never at peace in Gath. That city of my birth always irked and often enraged me by the barrenness of its ideas, the narrowness of its outlook, the stupidity of its judgment, the gloom of its atmosphere, and the ugliness of its aspect. But on the other hand, nothing that I saw of the world outside its impregnable walls attracted me very much more. I can never remember a time when I looked upon the world around me and saw that it was good. On the contrary, I saw that it was bad, but I felt that it might, easily, be very much worse. And I saw, or thought I saw, that the forces which were then making for change—the Liberal and the Democratic forces—would, if they triumphed—and their triumph seemed pretty well assured—render the world not only worse, but positively intolerable.

Democracy stood for all that was bumptious, unidealistic, disloyal, in the deeper sense of the word, anti-national and vulgar; and Democracy was upon us in its square-toed, hob-nailed boots. To many young men of enthusiastic temperament, in the beginning of the last quarter of the last century there was little to evoke their enthusiasm or to extort their admiration, except the personality of the Prime Minister and certain aspirations towards the expansion

of Empire. Upon them the fall of the Beaconsfield administration in 1880 came as a staggering and a stunning blow. When it was quickly followed by the surrender at Majuba and the understanding with the Irish called the treaty of Kilmainham, darkness seemed to cover the political horizon and the end of all things decent to be near at hand. To our stupefied minds and stricken spirits politics seemed to lose their value. They appeared a game, a game, too, in which we had been badly beaten; and in dudgeon and despair we retired from the table.

Fortunately for us, there were houses of refuge. The early 'eighties was a period of Movements, of coteries, literary, artistic, social . . . and of Influences. Now Movements and coteries may be silly, pretentious, irrelevant; but at least they are interesting. It is gratifying to one's feeling of self-consequence, it engenders a satisfying sense of superiority, to shut oneself up, as it were, in a little mansion of one's own, and with a few eclectic spirits to think scorn of the world outside. So it was with some of us. We felt that we had had the misfortune to be born in a stupid, vulgar, grimy age, an age, too, that was getting stupider, grimmer, more vulgar, every day, and so we turned away from it to a little world within a world, a world of poetry, of pictures, of music, of old romance, of strangely designed wall-papers, and of sad-coloured velveteen. Many of us (though I was not one of them) wore velveteen all day. I wore it only in the evening.

Disgusted with the present, apprehensive of the future, we naturally were amorous of the past. I think on the whole we preferred the thirteenth to any other century. We tried to live the life of a more lovely age. We could not manage it, of course; but we did our little best when we were alone together, we of the elect. We called ourselves the elect. I sometimes catch myself doing that even now. I often

catch myself thinking it. Our girls found the prevalent fashions repulsive, so they studied old pictures and clothed themselves in soft and clinging gowns of sage green, and of old gold

*Such as the early Tuscan's art prefers,*

and silver grey, and of the hues of decaying foliage—and utterly charming they looked . . . and were.

The Burne-Jones type was the Ideal. The measure of our admiration of a woman was the degree of her resemblance to it. And it is remarkable how many young women of that time did resemble it. They came to resemble it. They began, many of them, by being just plump, fresh complexioned, English maidens, and in next to no time they were "Damosels," with pallid cheeks, scarlet lips, sad, earnest eyes, and hair wondrously attired. Poetry was our daily bread. We read it aloud to each other for glorious hours on end. Some of us wrote it; we all of us read it. Mr. William Morris was our laureate; his work our standard. His poetry presented to us another world, a world that never was on sea or land; a world of strange beauty and bizarre romanticism; a rococo world wherein brave gentlemen wore glittering armour and fair ladies dressed indescribably. William Morris, the William Morris of the "Defence of Guinevere" and "The Haystack in the Floods" was the solace of our sedate moods. In our more passionate and vibrant moments we turned to Swinburne, the Swinburne of the "Poems and Ballads," not of the "Songs before Sunrise," for ours was a twilight or a candle-lit day. We revelled in the "Triumph of Time" and "Dolores." This, for example, charmed and exhilarated us:

*Thou wert fair in the fearless old fashion  
And thy limbs are as melodies yet  
And move to the music of passion  
With lithe and lascivious regret.*

*What ails us, O gods, to desert you  
For creeds that refuse and restrain  
Come down and redeem us from virtue,  
Our Lady of Pain.*

We were greatly ashamed of our austerity, and although there was no Sex question to perplex us, and such phrases as "Sex freedom" were never on our lips, we were contemptuous of Virtue, and spoke of her as though she were an aged and acidulous maiden aunt. Such was our theory—in point of fact, I believe our lives were in every way as correct as those of all the young Philistine folk outside our coteries.

The truth is we, by reason of our aloofness, felt ourselves so immeasurably superior in manners, tastes, and intelligence to those same Philistines that we thought a world delivered over to them, and evidently for ever to be under their dominion, was a world not worthy of us, and we pretended to ourselves that we should be glad to be rid of it. *Mark, we began by pretending.* Those of us who had a turn for verse used to write sonnets to Death of whom we spoke as of a deeply desired and longed for lover. I well remember going to call one afternoon on a young man, who is to-day, I believe, a member of the Fabian Society, at his chambers in the Temple. He lived on the third floor, and when I arrived at his flight of stairs I found those stairs carpeted by a number of young women in greenish and yellowish velvet and silk drapery, all curled up in sinuous poses, and looking for all the world like a lot of dear little caterpillars. I mounted no higher . . . for I was told that the rooms were full already and that their owner was reading aloud from James Thomson's "City of Dreadful Night." The young ladies on the stair were an overflow meeting. Now that episode did not strike me as in the least humorous or odd. On the contrary, I went away congratulating myself on the thought that there

was still some love of truth and beauty left in Ascalon.

Then there happened a strange thing. I said that we *affected* a disgust with life that we did not altogether feel; and although it is extraordinarily difficult to reconstitute a mental process after twenty-five years, I think that that is true. But the pose, if pose it were, was slowly transformed into a reality. The result of this deliberate search after a sort of esoteric happiness, of this detachment from popular interests and the affairs of the workaday world, of this attempt to escape from the insistent sordidness, the blatant ugliness of our surroundings, to create as it were, an interior realm of art and poetry, of rehabilitated romance, was a deep and a malign pessimism—so far an empirical, not a philosophic, pessimism, but a pessimism of conviction all the same. Not even the robust masculinity of our favourite Browning was potent to help us. We extolled his art, but we flouted his ethic. The poem of James Thomson's that I have just mentioned, "The City of Dreadful Night," was for me a sort of message, an evangel of the Real Truth of Things. I do not mean for a moment that I was always miserable—I do not know that I was ever that exactly—there were, of course, purple moments, rose-pink hours, and even the rest of the time was not given to tears and lamentation. But I felt that I ought, as a reasonable man, to be miserable, that there was nothing in the world to be cheery about. It was just at this time that I had written in beautiful script, framed in ivy-leaves, decorated with a skull, and hung over the mantelpiece of my bedroom, these merry lines of Swinburne's :

*From too much love of living,  
From hope and fear set free,  
We thank with brief thanksgiving  
Whatever gods may be*

*That no life lives for ever ;  
That dead men rise up never ;  
That even the weariest river  
Winds somewhere safe to sea.*

I dramatized myself as that "weariest river."

I have said that the pessimism of this period was empirical. That is to say, it was the result of observation. One saw that the greater part of mankind were, and always had been, wretched, or at any rate that they lived in conditions that, had oneself been in similar conditions, would have rendered one's own life wretched. One looked in vain for any forces at work that promised to improve those conditions. One saw that the world was bad ; one knew of no way of making it better. One did not realize, as yet, that it was necessarily bad ; that there could in the nature of things *be* no way of making it better. That conviction experience can never give.

It was in that state of mind that I read for the first time the great work of Schopenhauer, and therein found that philosophical justification which had so far been lacking. I shall not spend, or rather waste, many moments in dissertating upon the philosophy of Schopenhauer to an audience like this, an audience every member of which, probably, has a closer and a more recent acquaintance with it than I have, and knows that Schopenhauer is the most attractive because the most lucid and literary of all Teutonic metaphysicians. He has beyond all modern philosophers the magic of an incomparable style. It is not only easy to understand him ; it is impossible to misunderstand him. He has a rich vein of humour, as broad as Rabelais', as biting as Swift's, as subtle as Heine's, and unlike most other metaphysicians, except Plato, he condescends to frequent illustration, metaphor, and simile. As one reads him one becomes ensorcelled, held as by a wizard's spell. There is no tedious

inductive reasoning about Schopenhauer. He marches straight along the "high priori" road and drags his disciple with him. For him existence is *in itself* an evil. For every creature that feels to live is to will; to will is to strive, and to strive is to be miserable. "Life," he says, in so many words, "so far from being a state of enjoyment, is always, and necessarily, one of suffering; and the deepest cause of this suffering lies in the Will itself. Life is a struggle for existence with the certainty of being vanquished." Intelligence, itself a late expression of the Will, is only an additional burthen to our lot; for increased intelligence is only increased capacity for pain. The genius is more unhappy than the average man, the average man more unhappy than the average oyster. If one had to condense the Schopenhauerian conclusion into a sentence one could not do much better than slightly to alter certain words of Browning's:

. . . *This world's a blot, a blank.*  
*For me it means intensely and means ill.*

Not even suicide shall save us, for suicide is the very strongest act of assertion. Temporary escape can be got only in æsthetic contemplation. Before a great work of art we are lifted for a moment out of personality and pettiness, the clamour of desire is hushed, the Will itself is quieted. But this is for a moment only. Mankind cannot be always reading poetry, or looking at pictures, or listening to music. The hope, if one may dare to use such a word, of the race, lies in a universal act of suppression, of negation of the Will to Live, the *fons et origo* of all our woe. Only by such an act can the "blunder of existence" be corrected.

## II

With the intellectual acceptance of the pessimistic philosophy one reaches the antipodes of Socialism. One negates Socialism. Faith in Socialism is compatible with almost every metaphysical system, with almost every religious creed; and the worst foes of Socialism are they who so much as hint that there is any essential or necessary contradiction between it and most of the creeds and systems that are believed by men. But with religions or philosophies that are based upon, or even deeply tinted by, pessimism, Socialism is for ever incompatible and eternally at war. Socialism calls for energy; pessimism breeds paralysis. Pessimism is the Arctic Circle of the soul, an ice-bound, sterile land in which no flower can bloom, no green thing can grow. If any of you doubt this, let him try for himself. Sooner or later he will find either that his pessimism will submerge and stifle his Socialism, or that he will shake himself free from pessimism as a cleanly man shakes off filthy rags.

I accepted the Schopenhauerian philosophy, then, but although I accepted I never acquiesced. Like the devils I believed and trembled. Against the malignant Will to Live all within me that was not of the intellect was in high revolt, and the intellect alone is not the man. Whatever the Will to Live might be, my own will was *not* malign. When I came to think it over, I was quite sure of that. Like a man in wrath, the heart rose up and gave a flat lie to the brain. But Schopenhauer taught that my own individualized will was only, as it were, a part, a sort of off-shoot, of the fundamental Will of the universe—the malignant Will to Live. If the Will to Live was malignant, my own will, its lawful child, must be malignant too, for one does not gather figs from thistles. But my own will

was not malignant. It did not will evil; it willed good. Here, then, was an irreconcilable contradiction. Good, and the desire for good, it seemed, had somehow come out of evil. The Will to Live, said Schopenhauer, was a blind Will. Yet out of it somehow had come intelligence; which is not blind, but perceptive. So the blind sire had begotten a son with seeing eyes—a son who sat in judgment on the father.

Well, this particular son, after a long and patient trial, condemned his sire and sentenced him as an impostor and a fraud. I felt that the Will to Live, even if it were, *ought not to be*. Deep down in the very depths of me was a feeling—I may not call it more than that—a Faith, that what ought not to be cannot be eternal, cannot be fundamental, cannot be in the everlasting constitution of things.

I believe now that this Faith, the Faith that the world is rational, and that the world is right, that there cannot be in it unresolvable discords, unreconcilable contradictions, this faith in what R. L. Stevenson called “the eternal decency of things” is a faith capable of philosophical justification, and I believe that the marvellous brain of Hegel philosophically justified it; but even if that be not so, even if it must remain a Faith and a Faith only—the substance of what is only hoped for, the evidence of what is but dimly seen—even so it is a good, sound wholesome Faith to work with, and the Faith, moreover, which is the stimulus and the inspiration of all social reform, of all social endeavour; the Faith by which we Socialists shall live.

This realization of the inadequacy of Pessimism as an interpretation of life; this realization that Schopenhauer leaves out of his reckoning a whole side of man's nature, and that the most important and significant, was my first step towards Socialism and towards spiritual redemption.

The period that followed was, as it were, a period of convalescence, and we all know how the spirits rise in convalescence. I felt as Nietzsche felt when he had thrown off the spell of Wagner ; as a man feels when he has broken from the thralldom of some *maladive* mistress who has enchained his senses and sickened his soul. I was my own man again ; once more a young man with his heart in the right place and in search of ideas, hungry for ideas, ready to listen to anybody who had ideas to offer ; particularly political ideas, ideas that might lead to action, that might set one doing something. My old friends the Tories were bankrupt of ideas. I was still embittered and too prejudiced to listen to anything a Liberal had to say, and just at that moment I discovered that William Morris was calling himself a Socialist. I knew that if William Morris was a Socialist, whatever else Socialism might be it would not be ugly, and so I turned to the Socialists, who just then were beginning to make a clamour.

It was at this moment, this psychologic moment, to use a hackneyed phrase, when I saw that the world, the immediate, temporal world about me, was full of foulness, but believed that it might be cleansed from its abominations, healed of its gangrenes, purged of its stupidities, that I made the acquaintance in print and in the flesh of three inspiring and invigorating personalities, Henry George, Mr. Hyndman, and Thomas Davidson.

It is difficult to picture even to one's own memory ; it is impossible to present to the vision of others, the effect upon young, eager, and rebelling minds of the torrential eloquence, the red-hot rhetoric of Henry George. And it was something more than eloquence, something more than rhetoric ; something quite other than mere magnificent gift of the gab. It was filled with invincible conviction, charged with a naïve, an almost child-like but no less puissant sincerity, that

gave a decorative quality to occasional platitudes, and a fascination to not infrequent fallacies. Henry George was not a Socialist, but he deeply ploughed and fertilized the soil in which the seeds of Socialism, scattered by other hands than his, took root and grew; and English Socialism owes to him a debt that can never be repaid.

The lectures and speeches of Mr. Hyndman and one of his books, "England for All," I think, completed the conversion that Henry George had begun. Mr. Hyndman was the apostle of the Marxian economics. He preached the Marxian gospel with all the fervour and force of a Peter the Hermit or a General Booth. He fired off the Marxian principles at his audiences as a battery of quick-firing guns pours shells upon an exposed position—and it was almost as difficult to keep one's head level before the one as before the other. The Marxian system, as expounded by Mr. Hyndman, with its air of pontifical infallibility, with its prophetic note of fatefulness, with its pose of scientific exactitude, with its confident appeal to history, is of all others best fitted to impose upon and to impress the plastic mind of the uninstructed inquirer. It is the system perhaps best of all suited to the purposes of propaganda. Then there was always something electrically contagious about Mr. Hyndman himself. His air of cocksureness, his breezy *bonhomie*, the exhilarating atmosphere of optimism which seemed to exhale from his very presence, carried . . . well, I won't say carried all before it, but I will say carried *me* before it. Even when he said absurd things, such as his prediction of the social revolution for the year 1889, although we didn't believe him, we more than half hoped that it might be true. Personally, I gave the capitalist *régime* at least another ten years of life.

In recalling the several factors that have brought about a conversion, it is not easy to discriminate the

particular ones that were predominant, but I think I may say without very much dubiety that the predominant factor in my own conversion to the Socialist Faith was Mr. Hyndman, and I am glad to be able from the platform of this Society to pay him this poor little tribute of thankfulness.

Mr. Hyndman had the faculty of inducing you to think as he and his master thought. Thomas Davidson had the power in a still higher degree of prompting you to think for yourself. He compelled you to realize that your own thought was an indispensable preliminary to any profitable action. He had a short way with catch words, with shibboleths, with pinch-beck paradoxes. He demanded of you that you should define your terms, and he put his demand with an authority that you felt little inclined to question. His method was the Socratic. If in a talk with him you let drop a heedless phrase, such a phrase, say, as "sex freedom" or "property in women and children," that phrase was not suffered to lie where it dropped. You had to pick it up, exhibit it under the lamp, possibly even under the microscope, and explain it, or admit ruefully that you could not explain it because you really did not know very much about it. It is extremely wholesome to the soul, if extremely annoying to the *amour propre* to have to admit that one has been a parrot. That was the sort of healthy discipline one underwent in an hour's conversation with Davidson. He was a spiritual tonic. One came away from an evening's talk with him with the sharpened appetite for ideas. I think it was he who rid me of the last clinging mud of the pessimist bog. He convinced me that to abandon the solution of a problem either intellectual or social because to the practical understanding it looked insoluble was to be guilty of sheer mental sloth and moral cowardice, so charged was he with the conviction that the human mind is capable of solving all problems and the human will of over-

throwing all obstacles. It was by no accident that the little knot of men who in the winter of 1883 met in Mr. Pease's rooms to talk over some common methods of reaching common ends, and who, a few months later, founded this Society, came there, nearly all of them, with minds fresh from contact with the mind of Thomas Davidson. And I believe that many of the qualities that are most traditionally characteristic of our Society—its dislike of exaggeration, its contempt for the gaseous and the flatulent, its suspicion of the mawkishly sentimental, its impatience of pretentious formulas, no matter how felicitously phrased, above all, the critical attitude of its corporate mind, are largely due to his impress. In the interests of sane Socialism, my hope and faith are that these traditional characteristics may long continue to be ours.

## III

I shall not attempt to retell here the story of the early days of the Fabian Society—that has already been written by a better pen than mine—all I need to do is just to record the effect of the early meetings of the Society upon myself. At those early meetings we discussed anything and everything the most ill-regulated imagination could picture as having any bearing whatever upon social regeneration. We spent one evening, I remember, in listening to a lady who held that the human race would speedily be redeemed if only every member of it were outfitted with an iron bedstead supplied by the State and stamped with an official stamp as a warning to pawnbrokers. We spent many evenings, indeed a part of most evenings (for the subject was always cropping up) over the controversy of physical force *versus* peaceful permeation. Then there were the Utopians, the people who desired to live in communities and on apples. They gave us a deal of trouble. We had a fair percentage of currency cranks, too, people who wanted to abolish money and who never could answer the ever recurring question, mostly asked by myself, how they proposed to settle with their cabmen.

The mental process some of us went through during those years was a process of definition, of definition in the true sense of the word, for all definition, says Kant, is determination, and all determination is negation. We were always cutting away top-hamper, always throwing something or somebody overboard. When I first called myself a Socialist I had all sorts of hopes and aspirations; there were all sorts of changes, changes in all directions, that I desired; and all these aspirations and hopes, and all these changes that I desired, all these, some of them merely personal pre-

dilections and presuppositions, I hitched on to Socialism. Socialism I seemed to think was a widely inclusive term which embraced anything I particularly wanted. And what was true of myself, was, I noticed, true of others. The younger members in the movement to-day can have no idea of the wild imaginings and queer phantasies which were supposed to be implied in Socialism. It was by some held to be unsocialistic to travel in anything but a third-class railway carriage or to wear any other headgear than a soft hat. Of course, all this was natural enough, inevitable, I suppose, to the early stages of any revolutionary movement. Such a movement attracts to itself all who are in revolt against society for any and every reason; all who desire to break through some restriction that society imposes, or to gain something that society withholds. The Socialist movement has suffered perhaps more than any other from these irrelevant adherents, these persons in whose hearts and will Socialism, in any generally accepted or easily recognizable sense of the term, Socialism as defined in the Fabian Basis say, is subordinated to some other revolutionary aim. We are always gaining recruits of this sort, but most fortunately, most blessedly, we are always losing them too. Were it not so we should long ago have been smothered by them, and the "pure milk of the word" would by this time have been so adulterated as to be an unspeakable, an unimaginable mixture.

Of course, a man may be a Socialist and have all sorts of views on all sorts of questions unconnected with Socialism—I suppose most of us, all of us in fact, are in that case—but if he insist upon violently connecting any of these views with Socialism, upon making them an integral part of Socialism, upon denying the right to the name Socialist to all such as do not hold these other views, then he is doing incalculable harm

to the Socialist cause, and he becomes a powerful hindrance to the Socialist propaganda.

I have often seen a Socialist speaker, who was getting a quiet, and even a sympathetic hearing, suddenly turn his whole audience against him, and against Socialism, by introducing, quite unnecessarily, quite irrelevantly, some opinion which had no more to do with Socialism than with the Milky Way.

Well, it was the existence and the persistence of this sort of loose-thinking, loose-lipped person that rendered imperative the formulation of the Fabian Basis in its first and second states; just as the existence and persistence of the various heresies made necessary the several creeds of the Christian Church.

That work was not the work of an *ad hoc* committee appointed for the purpose of drawing it up and called upon to produce something or other by a given date. It was a natural development, evolved, not suddenly created, in response to an outcry. It was the final outcome of a long and clarifying experience. It was at once a minimum and a maximum. Any one who was a Socialist could accept it. Any one who could not accept it was not a Socialist. It contained all that was needful to salvation. It rejected all that was superfluous and inessential. Whatever views a man might hold which were not either explicit or implicit in the Fabian Basis were neither implicit nor explicit in the faith of Socialism.

It was not, of course, the last word upon the subject, but anything that may be added to it must come by development and not by accretion.

If I must state in a short and convenient form the Faith I hold, my Faith as a Socialist, I offer the Fabian Basis as a full and sufficient statement. I could wish that it were offered in a more attractive form; that it were more like a hymn and less like the condensed syllabus of an economic lecture. Above all, I could wish that it contained certain damnatory

clauses, similar to those in the Athanasian creed ; but still, even as it is, dry, prosaic, matter of fact, 'twill do, 'twill serve.

I accept it unreservedly, with all that it implies and all that it involves. Whatever changes, political, moral, religious, may follow logically and inevitably, from the economic revolution contemplated and advocated in the Fabian Basis, those changes I accept and welcome. But unless they can be proved, logically and inevitably, to follow upon the economic revolution, however much I may accept and welcome them, I am not going to have them forced upon me as part of my Faith as a Socialist.

Let me give an instance or two of certain changes that are held by a good many Socialists to follow necessarily on the economic revolution ; but which I find reason—I will not say to disbelieve, but at any rate to doubt, will follow necessarily on the economic revolution ; as a consequence of that revolution.

A great many Socialists, I find, take it for granted, assume it as something not worth arguing, much less worth proving, that the economic independence of women will consequentially follow on the economic revolution.

Now I suggest to you that the increasing economic independence of women, I mean the increase in the number of women who are earning their own livelihood, is due to the very causes that the economic revolution seeks to remove. The stimulus to the economic independence of women to-day is not a moral but an economic stimulus. The Northern factory girl who spends her ten hours a day amid the whirl of machinery, the London "general" the whole of those whose waking hours are passed in slavery to another of her own sex, the mother who wins her own and her children's dinner from the wash-tub, do so, not from any newly-developed desire to escape the chains of matrimony, but to avoid the pangs of starvation.

Their object is not economic independence, but daily bread. They are not thrusting themselves, they are being thrust, into the ranks of labour by sheer economic necessity.

The economic pressure which compels the women of the middle class to work is neither so great nor so obvious as is the case with the women on a lower social level. With the middle class woman, married or unmarried, it is not a question of keeping soul and body together, but it *is* a question of maintaining a certain not very lofty standard of comfort. During the years which followed the establishment of Free Trade and the development of railway enterprise the middle class standard of comfort went up like a rocket. Now it is well known that when a class has once raised its standard of comfort, it is extremely reluctant to see it lowered again. Parents work hard and practise thrift that their children may be reared at a certain level of material well-being. This level is the children's standard of comfort. They will do most things rather than fall short of it. It is a common saying, and like most common sayings it has a core of truth, that sons and daughters nowadays expect to begin where their fathers and mothers left off. The increasing competition has rendered it impossible for the heads of families to maintain by their own earnings adult sons and daughters at the standard of comfort to which they themselves have been accustomed. Then either the standard must be lowered or the income supplemented by the children's earnings—and the latter is the alternative adopted. So we have the daughters as well as the sons extruded from the home to the office, the counting-house, and the room where the typewriters tap.

Of course, there are other causes subsidiary to the economic cause which are inducing women to abandon domesticity for active work in the world. Higher and fuller education is giving to middle class women a

wider outlook and ingeminating a certain discontent with the restrictions and limitations of the home. But these are subsidiary causes only. The chief cause, the cause which counts, is the economic pressure of the capitalist system, the very system which Socialism is, *ex hypothesi*, about to destroy.

Well, now, one of the effects of that large transference of industrial capital from private to public ownership proposed in the Fabian Basis will be to increase the earnings, the real wages, of the wage and salary-earning classes. That is, to make it easier for husbands and fathers to support wives and daughters. This being so it seems to me a great and an unwarrantable assumption, and little more than an assumption, that the daughters and wives will, in greater numbers and more vehemently than they do now, insist on supporting themselves.

It may be that the economic independence of women will come. I think probably it will come. But that it will come as a necessary consequence of Socialism is a wholly unsubstantial hypothesis. The same sort of criticism will dissolve many similar hypotheses which have been tacked on to the Socialist creed, but which are in no way implicit to it. Such a phrase as "the abolition of property in women and children" turns out to be a mere rhetorical flourish. Judging *a priori*, and we can judge in no other way, it were surely safer to assume that better economic conditions, more and more widespread well-being, will tend rather to reintegration than to further disintegration of family life. But there is another and a more potent cause already at work which will do more than any economic change can do to secure the family against dissolution. Hitherto children have come into the world almost by accident, as it were. Unnumbered millions of them have been born to parents who had no desire for them, for whom they were little but inevitable nuisances. With the spread of physiological knowledge and the

growth of the practices that have already brought about the steady and continuous decline of the birth-rate, it seems almost certain that in the not far future children will be born only to those parents who desire them and in whom the parental instinct is strongly present and highly developed. That will put the great child question in an altogether different aspect. That sort of parent, I suggest to you, is likely to make short work of any undue interference or pragmatic encroachment on the part of the State. And this brings me to the suggestion that many modern developments that are called socialistic, and that are warmly advocated by Socialists, are not in any way integral, as it were, organic to Socialism; but are merely necessary expedients of a transition period. Consider, for instance, the movement in favour of feeding the children of the State schools. We Socialists desire to feed the children because as a matter of fact, so many of the children are at present unfed. And the children are unfed because the parents, owing to insufficiency of means, are unable properly to feed them; or because they have but a feeble sense of parental responsibility. But with the improvement in material conditions, such as Socialists contemplate, and with the higher moral standards that will accompany these conditions and to some extent be a consequent of them, also with the gradual disappearance of the men and women in whom the parental instinct is lacking, there will cease the necessity for the intervention of the State in this matter. Parents will feed their own children at their own tables and in their own way because they will love their children. There will be a return of the child to the home, just as there will be a return of the mother to the home. The progress of Socialism will remove the need for what are falsely called socialistic measures.

But I will trespass no further on your patience by any longer seeking to define the faith I hold by nega-

tion, though I am not unconscious that in the present phase of the Socialist propaganda it is as needful to tell the world what we do *not* as it is to tell it what we *do* believe ; and that negative are as urgent as positive assertions if Socialism is to be cleared of fog and muzziness, of mire, mist and moonshine.

The limitations of my Socialist *credo* will, I fancy, bring me into Mr. Hobson's category of economic as contrasted with ethical Socialism. In point of fact, neither of these categories is of itself adequate. Both are conventional only, and there is no sharply limned and exclusive frontier to either of them. The impulse to change the economic conditions is itself a moral impulse. If I appear unduly and unnecessarily to have narrowed the issues it is because I am convinced that concentration makes for strength and diffusion for weakness ; because I deprecate the strategy that would spread the Socialist attack over too wide a front. I am as fully convinced as ever Mrs. Webb, Mr. Campbell, or Doctor Coit can be, that economic improvement of itself is no certain prophylactic against moral decay, and that if the material changes be not the outward and visible signs of an inward and spiritual grace ; if a finer social adjustment be not due to and accompanied by a finer will consciously working towards finer spiritual ends ; then, once more in humanity's long history the realization will be as bitter as the hope was bright.

1907.

## XXV

### IN THE SOUTH

A SHORT while ago my friend Mr. Grant Allen, novelist, man of science, and Fabian, wrote in a widely circulated English magazine an article whose object was to attract his fellow countrymen to Antibes. It was a distinct success. It attracted them, and among them myself. Now I have always had much confidence in Mr. Grant Allen when he has told me (also in popular magazines) of certain small fish who stroll about on the seashore in tropical climes, with their eyes carelessly tossed over their shoulders with a view to seeing what was going on behind them. I believed him with all the ingenuous trust of a school-boy in Baron Munchausen. And when he assured me of the existence of an English actor who cultivated cholera germs as other people hatch chickens, I accepted his statement without turning a hair. At least *he* would never trifle with science, I felt sure.

Judge then of my surprise, when upon reaching Antibes railway station (after a journey of a thousand miles or so) I found nothing in the least like anything that Mr. Grant Allen had described. I rubbed my eyes and began to doubt whether I had really, and in truth, awaked from one of those long sleeps for which the French trains, which travel quite three

miles an hour, give one such ample opportunities. Instead of the verdure-clad woods and multi-coloured acres of flowers, spoken of in the magazine, I found myself in a quaint little Mediterranean town—all white walls, red roofs, soldiers and smells. When I call the town "Mediterranean," I have sufficiently indicated that it is not French, or even European. This "tideless, dolorous, midland sea," as Swinburne has most inaptly called it, for it is neither tideless nor dolorous, washes fifty miles of Europe for one of Asia, and yet the mysterious influence of mystic Asia is over it all. This little town, for instance, is much more like Damascus or Jerusalem than it is like Paris or Boulogne-sur-Mer. It is of the Orient, Eastern; and as it is, so are all towns of more than fifty years of age, whose square old towers, whose embattled walls, look down on this sapphire sea.

For the lamentable fact must out. Mr. Grant Allen has never been to Antibes! or, rather, he never had been until a day or two ago, when he came to call on me and I showed him round. I took him up the old Roman tower built two thousand years ago, and I introduced him to all the smells.

Some three miles from here, on the summit of a hilly promontory, stands a white-walled hotel—the sort of thing which might have been built in Trafalgar Square and sent out here by parcel post. It is a truly British combination of ostentation and stinginess. Here, in Antibes, they don't feed us to repletion, but at the Grand Hotel du Cap (I had nearly written the *Grant* Hotel du Cap) they give you less—at least, so I infer from the compliments of Mr. Allen on our humble six-course breakfast. At the Grand Hotel the waitresses are things of beauty in Swiss costumes—blue silk aprons, muslin sleeves, velvet bodices, silver chains, and neat ankles. What matter,

then, if the wine they pour out be thinner than that served by the single fat waiter here? But what true-born Briton recks of food when his heart is upheld by the chance of touching elbows with a Dean? What are the low cares of the stomach to one whose soul is satisfied with a bow from a Bishop on the balcony? And at the Grand Hotel such things do happen.

They do really. My acquaintance, Snobson, of the National Liberal Club, a robust Radical, whom I ran across the other day under the orange-trees of Monte Carlo, had tears of pride in his voice as he said to me, "It's well worth the extra ten francs a day and all the extras. You do meet such interesting people. In England I have never even shaken hands with an Alderman—here I'm living under the same roof with the greatest lights of literature, sir. I picked up Mr. Grant Allen's table-napkin for him at breakfast this morning—last night the Rev. Mr. Haweis swore at me on the stairs. My wife has been spoken to by a Russian princess!" Oh, my dear fellow countrymen—how delightful you are—and yet how proud I am of you!

Perhaps you wonder why, considering such attractions are within easy reach of me, I am still in this hard-baked little Eastern town. Well, to tell the truth, I long ago discovered that the "literary light" considered as a talker is a bit of a fraud. It is only when he picks up his pen that he becomes not as other men. He who lives upon phrases takes good care not to squander them without a *quid pro quo*. Many and many a time at the dinner-table or in the smoking-room have I seen the fire of genius flash from the literary man's eye. He had just thought

of a good thing, I knew. I waited breathlessly—fingering my pencil the while, eager to jot it down—but it never came. He suppressed it at the moment of birth, and it went into his next article in the *Saturday Review*. Far otherwise is it with the brown-skinned, bright-eyed children of the South—here in sun-burnt Antibes. No sooner is the epigram, the paradox, the witticism, conceived in the brain than it flashes from between the white teeth. And why not? These things are not saleable here, in a place which boasts not a weekly paper. And that is why I prefer, for a while, the society of the alien down here, among narrow streets and dark archways, to that of my literary *confrères* away there amongst the olive-trees and Swiss waitresses at the Grand Hotel.

And the epigram, the paradox, the witticism, is not rare. The common talk of these men and women of the country of the troubadours is as picturesque and coloured as their surroundings. They deal not in second-hand phrases or in quotations from the comic papers. The thought is pictorial, and the word is like unto the thought. Like the Board School child, they “use dictionary words quite careless.” Chatting to them on the ramparts, when the setting sun is tinting with rose colour the snow-capped peaks of the Maritime Alps and turning the little bay into one wondrous, gleaming opal, you shall hear more good things in twenty minutes’ talk than in a week of Kensington drawing-rooms, even when Oscar Wilde and his followers are of the guests.

And here, too, something is absent which too often is present in the most gilded of London *salons*—vulgarity, to wit. The folk here know how to carry courtesy to the point where it just *stops short* of subservience and cringing. Here a man will touch his hat to you without a vision of a copper to follow,

and that is the sort of man to whom you, in your turn, raise your hat. Here again the men seem to have dropped, or never to have acquired, the odious Parisian habit of looking at women with the look which a glutton gives to his favourite dish. I never walk along a boulevard in a big French town with a personable woman without feeling an almost irresistible itch to lay my stick across the face and apply the toe of my boot to another part of the person of well-nigh every well-dressed Frenchman I meet. And yet here there is some excuse for male staring, for the companion of most of my walks abroad is worth more than a passing eye-blink. She is pretty, dainty, piquant, and altogether pleasant to look upon. She dresses in a blue skirt and blue jacket with a bright yellow blouse, and she wears a little round scarlet cap set jauntily on her head at a provoking angle. As she herself says, she looks like a paroquet—but then, as I tell her, a paroquet is a nice, decorative little bird.

No; here we seem further away from Paris and its ways than we do in the Burlington Arcade. And that is strange, for half a dozen times a day the trains from Paris snort past our station laden with England, America, and fashionable France, and we are within walking distance of Nice. Nice is a southern Brighton *plus* palm-trees and *minus* the long line of English girls on English horses, which, to my thinking, glorify the King's Road, and make it even as the plains of Paradise. I never can see what the travelled Englishman finds to rave about in Nice. The raptures of the rich Yankee are comprehensible, for there he has a chance of scattering his dollars, and of letting the world see him scatter. Nice has not grown—it has been made—made like its bouquets, for the wealthy foreigner; and one feels that did he, for

ever so brief a while, withdraw the sunshine of his presence, it would droop and fade, and grow dull brown and dirty yellow, even as they, should the clouds hide their god's face for the space of a week. Mind, I don't complain of this habit of the men of every race of impressing the seal of their own individuality upon everything they touch. It is the mark of conquering strength, of puissant personality. Had the Anglo-Saxon been content to lose himself in the tones and colours of the countries where he bided, he would never have taught the nations the lesson of political freedom, and girdled the world with a broad belt of English-speaking men. But the Briton's habit of taking Britain with him wherever he goes, in his portmanteau so to speak, is by way of being a little tedious, isn't it? It would hardly be worth while to travel at all, if our compatriots travelled much more.

Oh yes, I forgot, the vulgar has its temple even here. It is a fifth-rate restaurant where, of evenings, those that have a taste that way may drink execrable coffee, and listen to some execrable songs of a sort that in England would have provoked the interference of the police even before the days of the County Council—nasty songs, helped out by nastier gestures. Here the Frenchman can worship the great goddess Lubricity, without one, at least, of whose shrines no spot of French earth is quite complete. To the credit of Antibes be it said, this particular fane doesn't appear, financially, to flourish.

These people have their faults. To the healthy and strong they are genial, polite, and kindly enough, but to the feeble and ill they are cold and indifferent, and the dead they treat hardly with decency. A

townsman may be walking in the Place at three in the afternoon, and in his grave before nine the next morning. So great is the haste to bury their dead out of their sight that one is inclined to believe it was on the Mediterranean slopes that the immortal lines were written :

*Little Alexander's dead ; jam him in his coffin,  
Don't get such a jolly chance for a funeral often.*

But after all, is not this dislike of pain and death rather an attribute of the animal than a vice of the human ? And from the point of view of pure science is there not much to be said for it ? When grave and reverend seigniors of science can be heard any day lecturing on the sterilization of the unfit—and bullying us for our charity to lame dogs—one mustn't be too hard on the untutored child of nature if he puts into practice their theories without ever having heard of them, and turns his head away from sickness and sorrow in search of pleasanter sights. Happily for the world, its scientists have never been its prophets. When it takes its creed from the lecture-room and the laboratory the end will be not far off.

Since last week I have had further opportunities of studying the French soldier, and, believing as I do that the European question is the question of the continued existence of France as a great Power, I need hardly say that I have availed myself of them. If the French soldier was equal to the trouble the French nation is taking with him, Europe would have to prepare itself for another period of Gallic domination. And who knows ? Perhaps for another Waterloo. But he isn't, and that's the whole gist of the matter. Personal vanity seems a poor sort of thing looked at

by itself with the eye of a moralist. Still, the fact remains that the soldier who declines to leave barracks save in speckless uniform and with cap at the right cock, who knows how to use a swagger-stick and fancies that all the women must needs be in love with him, is, other things being equal, the soldier who bears him best in fight. In the French army they have no word for "smart"—and they haven't the thing.

They improve the landscape, though; and they are much given to walking about in it. One comes upon them at the most unexpected moments, strolling, in threes mostly, among the pine-woods and the olive-trees, or the rugged rocks of the shore, and the blue of tunic and red of trouser add the needed note of colour to the scene. For whatever the descriptive writer may say, the prevailing tone of the Riviera is grey. The rocks are grey, and the olive-trees are grey, and rocks and olive-trees about make up the picture. It is not in sun-scorched lands that the artistic eye will go to search for colour, but in our own moist land—in Kentish meadows, in Sussex marshes, and on Yorkshire hill-sides.

Please don't suppose, because I am in the paradise of the stockbroker and the Chicago millionaire, that I live as they do. Plain living and high thinking—if not fine writing—are as possible here as in Fleet Street. Civilization, with all its sins, has at least made it possible for poverty to travel. The most moderate of incomes will enable one to flee fog and frost and seek sunshine and sweet air. Only sternly resolve to resist the allurements of English ecclesiastics and Russian Royalties, and you shall find life more than tolerable on some poor four shillings a day.

Here there are sea and sky and rocks and rest. But it is not for these alone that one loves Antibes. Many other places may be more lovely, though this is good enough for ordinary folk—most other places are more genteel, but no other where by this blue sea one can live for five francs a day. This is an attribute that appeals to all tastes. Thus in our little *real* Antibes—the French, the walled in, the ungenteel—we have a party of painters, romancists, rhymers, journalists—all happy, all idle, all rejoicing in the fair jewels of sea and sun and sky, and above all in the rare mercy which even moves our poet to the song following :

### RONDEAU OF THE HOTEL DU COMMERCE

*To Those at Home*

*Five francs a day ! Five francs a day  
For diner and for déjeuner,  
For little rooms, whose windows high  
Show us blue hills, blue sea, blue sky,  
And snowy mountains far away.*

*At Nice and Monaco our way  
Was bleak with bills, our skies were grey ;  
But here we pay, with grateful sigh,  
Five francs a day !*

*Here life flowers daily, glad and gay  
With citron, rose, and oranger !  
We watch the bright, light days go by,  
And think of you at home. Ah, why  
Are you not also here, to pay  
Five francs a day ?*

1892.

## XXVI

### A POINT OF VIEW

To set matters right with Propriety at the outset let me say at once that the person whose views were poured into my sympathetic ear yesterday, which views I am now about to record for your information, was a male person. I confess that I could have found it in my heart to wish that it had been otherwise. Naught within the range of possibility would have fitted my humour better than a quiet, intimate talk with a young and beautiful girl. I was in a pensive, meditative, almost sentimental mood. Upon the slightest provocation I could have said the nicest things in the most choice and charming language. To the true artist it is an even greater pleasure to say pretty things than to hear them said, though that, too, is delightful. The place, the time, the attitude of mind, all were propitious. Yesterday was the most perfect of all the perfect days that this wonderful October has given us. The air of the Kentish lane was as clear, as pure, as soft as though it had been wafted from across the sapphire Southern sea to some green-grey olive-clad slope on the Italian Riviera. One looked through the baring branches of the overhanging trees, through a shimmering glory of scarlet and crimson and gold, to an ocean of infinite azure. In those baring branches a late-lingering bird was chanting a hymn to departing summer.

And I was alone. That was the sad fact that caused the whole circumstance just to lack perfection. For we have it upon high authority that in a garden, amidst trees and sunshine and sweet air, it is not good for man to be alone. In a sponge bath, perhaps, yes ; but not in a garden. The Bible itself says no.

I realized the great truth acutely, almost painfully. One note was wanting, I felt, to make the whole harmonious—a woman's voice, a young woman's voice, a young woman's low voice. Had a girl been with me at the moment, and had she laughed with the shrill "tee-hee," so fashionable just now that I really believe it must be taught in schools, I should have strangled her and her laughter there and then, and strolled quietly to the nearest police-station to give myself up for the deed. In the subsequent trial I should have defended myself on the grounds that an outrage on good taste is deserving of instant death, and that he who deals out the punishment merits reward rather than condemnation. My address, based upon sound artistic principles, would, I am sure, have convinced the most Philistine jury that ever was empanelled, and, later on, would have been received with rapture by every reader of the *Sunday Chronicle*. For your sakes I could almost regret that the occasion for delivering it never arose. If it be true that the blossoms and the scents of Spring stimulate the heart to hope, no less true is it that Autumn's tints and Autumn's perfumes stir the deeps of memory, and recall to mind all sorts of forgotten and delicious experiences. The influence of perfumes on the soul of man has never been, so far as I know, adequately dealt with in literature. But it shall be some day, and by me, and in this paper. Why is it, for instance, that one never could be aught but chaste as Diana in the proximity of

mignonette ? And why does one's garment of virtue fall to rags when the heavy odour of red roses fills the evening air ? But I will discuss this matter another time. Just now I am only concerned here to say that the curious, subtle, penetrating exhalation of the fallen leaves, the leaves of poplar and beech and aspen, that made a gorgeous Eastern carpet to my feet, opened, as by magic charm, some closed pages of the first, or let us say the second, volume of my life's story. On one of those pages I saw the portrait of a girl. Never mind her name, or her when, or her whereabouts. She, I felt, was the one thing lacking to make the whole complete. She was the picture of which all this glory of beauty was but the fitting frame.

*Come, then, complete incompleteness, O come !*

I cried, in the words of a great modern poet, who was at least twenty years my senior when he wrote them. And I waited for the miracle to happen. The miracle would happen, it seemed ; for just at the moment I heard a light footstep rustle the dead and dying leaves on the little footpath which led to and from the stile against which I rested. I turned with brain awlirl and heart tumultuous, and I saw—a young man !

We all know how, at moments of supreme emotion, the mind takes note of minute details which in its ordinary unruffled state pass it by unheeded. Men on the way to execution are said to be almost supernaturally observant. So I, in this vile instant of overwhelming disillusion and dismay, noticed that this accursed young man, whose hateful presence seemed to blight the very trees with leprosy and turn the blue of the sky to a leaden grey, had sandy hair, and a fluffy canary-coloured moustache of some

seven days' growth; that his eyes were pale blue; that his nose was snub; that his high hat needed ironing, and that its brim curled less than fashion demanded; that his trousers bagged unduly at the knees, and that his tan boots had evidently been rubbed over with a dirty cloth; that, to sum up, there was nothing wanting about him, from top to toe, to make him as unpleasant and as objectionable as one of God's creatures and a fellow man can be. All this my eyes took in ere he had advanced two paces in my direction. Then, the first shock over, a kindlier feeling smote me, and I decided not to knock him down and stamp on him; at least, until he had given me some provocation to violence greater than his mere advent upon the scene. He came up to me in a diffident, listless sort of way, and stopped at the stile, evidently expecting me to move out of his way. But that I would not do. That was asking a little too much. I stood still, and looked well away over the crown of his hat. After a moment's glacial silence he spoke—"Could you oblige me with a cigarette?" he said, quite politely, almost deferentially, in fact. "You'll pardon my asking you, but I am just dying for a smoke of some sort."

In my then humour had that young man been parching of thirst I would gladly have denied him a cup of cold water; had he asked bread it would have given me infinite pleasure to have handed him a stone; but when he appealed for tobacco, then, then he touched me in my tenderest spot. Psychologists tell us that sympathy comes from sharing the feelings of others, either in actual experience or in imagination, and psychologists, for once in a way, seem to me to be right. I have never been thirsty, not so thirsty as to want cold water, that is (hence probably my immunity from typhoid and kindred

plagues), and I don't remember ever to have gone a day without breakfast and dinner of sorts. But I have known what it is to yearn for tobacco with an infinite yearning, and (a worse thing still) I have found myself with a case full of cigars and ten miles away from a light, and so my heart went out at once to that young man with the fluffy moustache and the shockingly bad hat. I produced my cigarette-case. He lighted up and sucked away in silence until nearly half the frail delight was ashes. Then he said; "It's pretty rough when it won't run to a penny smoke, I can tell you."

My eyes were attracted to his watch-chain, the sort of thing that the advertisements call "a gentleman's gold albert."

"Oh," he replied, answering my unspoken query, and flicking the end of the chain from his pocket, an end to which nothing was attached. "It's not worth its weight in coppers. Uncle wouldn't have it at any price. He had the ticker a week ago and more."

I remarked that it was delightful weather for the time of the year. I admit that the observation was not strikingly original or specially to the point, but I really did not know what else to say, and I felt the time had come for saying something.

"Yes," he said, "it's fine enough as far as that goes. I wish it wasn't. When you're down on your luck and got the hump, the sunshine and the leaves and birds and things seem to make it worse somehow."

My sympathy with him swelled suddenly to quite sizable proportions. Here was a poetic sentiment put, perhaps, not quite poetically; a sentiment that pierced right to the heart of things. I had felt just that way myself. I, too, had hated nature for smiling in sunshine when I felt she ought to have mingled her tears with mine. I had stood on Brighton Downs

and ground my teeth and shaken my fist at the cloudless sky and laughing sea. It was that day when Maud—but I think I've told you that story before. Here were two points I had in common with this malapropos young man. We had both lacked tobacco ; we had both known sorrow and felt at odds with heartless nature. My manner as well as my feeling became sympathetic.

"Well, what's the matter?" I asked, as kindly as I know how ; "I don't suppose I can be of any use to you, but if there's anything I can do, why of course——"

"Oh," he replied, "mine's a common case, nothing out of the ordinary. I got chucked from a berth a month ago and there's no signs of another. That's all."

"And enough, too," I said. "What sort of a berth? Why were you chucked?" I did not add "Why don't you get another?" because that, nowadays, to a man out of work, is a stupid sort of question, and shows ignorance of the labour problem.

"I was an assistant at Hoseman and Hoseman's," he replied, "in the drapery, you know. Been there going three years. The new shopwalker had a down on me. It was all along of a young lady in the mantles—but never mind about that, gentlemen don't talk of those things. He was always fining me for breaking rules ; there were over a hundred rules in our shop ; you could hardly turn round without breaking one of them, and my twenty-one bob a week generally came to about fourteen by pay-day. Then at last I got the chuck altogether because I let an old girl go out of the shop without buying anything. It's my belief she never meant to buy anything from the first, and I said so. They called that cheek, and I was sacked on the spot."

"It has always seemed to me," I said, "upon those rare occasions when I have accompanied ladies

into drapers' shops that the toad under the harrow was a beast to be envied compared with the young gentleman behind the counter. Of course it's true the occupation is a light one——"

"Light one!" he echoed, cutting me short, "You just go and fetch down rolls of calico and flannel from a shelf as high as you can stretch, and put 'em back again fifty times a day, and see if you find it 'light.' I tell you, twenty-pound dumb-bells are nothing to it."

"Oh, well, lifting weights is good for the muscles," I said; "it develops the deltoid, you know, and all that sort of thing. No, it wasn't that I was thinking of. It was the aggravating way of a woman when she wants to match a shade of colour I meant. Now that I couldn't stand. I would much rather sweep a crossing than stand much of that."

But that unfortunate word of mine had hit him on a sore place apparently. He took no notice of my later remarks and harked back to it.

"Light," he went on. "Oh, yes, it's very light. Standing on your legs from eight in the morning until ten at night, often earlier and later than that. Seventy-six hours a week was my little lot. That was what it was supposed to be, you know. It was nearer ninety. Why, a working man wouldn't stand it. Here's the engineers striking for forty-eight hours. I should call forty-eight hours a blessed holiday."

"Why don't you do what the working men do to get that holiday then?" I asked. "Why not form a union?"

"Ah, well, we could hardly do that," he answered. "You see we are gentlemen after all, ain't we?"

"What a fortunate thing that must be for your employers!" I remarked.

The poor little sarcasm didn't touch him, and I was rather glad it didn't. He was bruised enough.

"That's about the only thing to be said for our

line," he continued. "It is genteel, when all's said and done. We're always called 'gentlemen,' you know, and 'sir' by the servants."

"That must be a comforting thought to go to bed with after twelve hours of lifting rolls of flannel and matching impossible shades of colour?" I suggested.

"Well, it is, in a way," he replied simply.

Ah me, ah me, from what strange unthought-of sources do the silly suffering sons of men draw comfort.

"I suppose they feed you like fighting cocks?" I said, merely for the sake of breaking silence.

He laughed a little scornfully. "Cag-mag and stale vegetables," he replied, "and no time to eat 'em in. They call it half an hour for dinner, but you can't often get down to it when it's ready; when you do get down the gravy's cold, and before you've got three mouthfuls you're wanted upstairs again as often as not. Oh, it's fine for the digestion!"

"Then how in the world do you manage to look so cheerful over it all?" I asked. "For you do look cheerful, you know," I went on. "Whenever I go into one of those large establishments like your late firm's I am always struck with the bright, brisk looks and amiable manners of the counter-jum—er—er, the young gentlemen behind the counter."

"Well, we're most of us young, you see," he said, "and we're generally engaged, more or less, to one of the young ladies in one of the other departments. We see her now and then as we pass in the passages and so on, and that keeps the heart up, you understand."

Oh everlasting miracle of youth and love!

Oh rapture unspeakable of being engaged more or less!

"As to the brightness and briskness," he continued, "well, you've just got to be bright and

brisk, you know, when the manager's eye's upon you. And 'amiable.' Lord love you, you'd be amiable if it cost you half-a-crown fine to be anything else."

I agreed with him. I could bring myself to wish that this world were one vast drapery establishment in which every one were fined half a crown for looking sulky.

I felt that I should be unfaithful to the cause of labour in general did I not use the time and opportunity to say a word in season. So I said it.

"If you are too genteel to form a union," I said, "a trade union, like any skilled mechanic, at least you might use your powers as electors. Why not form a sort of political union; there are lots of you in every large constituency; and so put pressure on the Parliamentary candidates to have your wrongs righted in Parliament?"

"We're not electors," he replied, "that's where it is. We don't even have bedrooms to ourselves."

"Ah, well, that doesn't matter much," I said, "if you had votes you wouldn't use them sensibly. I dare say you'd think political agitation ungentlemanly; now wouldn't you?"

"I don't know that I wouldn't," he responded candidly enough. "I don't hold with Radicalism and Socialism myself. My dad kept his own shop, and we were always a bit above our neighbours. Besides, there's another thing. We shop assistants don't always care to let the world know just how we're treated, you know. We might get looked down on if we did. And there's always a hope of getting on and having a business of our own. Some of us do have luck, you know. There's always a chance."

"And if you did get a business of your own. I suppose you would treat your assistants just as you have yourself been treated?" I said.

“ I dare say,” he answered. “ What’s good enough for me is good enough for others, I reckon.”

“ But is it good enough for you ? ”

“ Well, it’s better than I’ve got now anyway,” said he.

I wanted to think over this last remark of his, to think it over by myself. It seemed to me to contain the whole gist of the labour question.

I handed him the remaining contents of my cigarette-case.

“ Take these,” I said, “ they’ll keep you going for the rest of the day, and perhaps something will turn up. There’s always a chance, as you say.”

He took the cigarettes, reluctantly I thought, and nodded a silent thanks.

1897.

## XXVII

### THE HONEST WOMAN

I LEARN that over there in Paris they are amusing themselves by the discussion of the question—Are women honest? and that already some of the most famous of their literary men, Dr. Max Nordau, Marcel Prévost, Anatole France, and others, have taken part in the controversy. I confess that to me the question, put so bluntly, sounds just a little bit rude and singularly un-French. Personally, I should not like to put the interrogation in an individual way to any woman of my acquaintance. I should be sorry, indeed, to ask of the next woman I met, “Are you honest, madam?” I should expect never to meet that woman again, or at least to be cut next time I did meet her.

And it makes me feel a little uncomfortable to ask of a whole sex what politeness forbids my asking of any one member of it. However, a journalist, I suppose, must be prepared now and then to make sacrifice of his own feelings, and, after all, where Marcel Prévost—to whom, by the way, a writer in a London literary paper recently did me the honour to compare me—rushes in I may not fear to tread. But I shall endeavour to tread delicately, as he who walks on egg-shells or on hot bricks.

Before discussing any proposition it is always well to make sure of your terms; otherwise the discussion is likely to end—well, as most discussions do, in fact,

end. It were idle to dispute as to whether women are honest or not until we discover exactly what we mean by honesty. Here the dictionary shall help us. The invaluable Webster defines honesty as "characterized by integrity or fairness and straightforwardness in conduct, thought, speech, etc.; sincere, free from fraud, guile, or duplicity; open, frank," and, I take it, we may rest quite content with the definition of so high an authority.

Accepting that definition, then, the reply to the question would seem to be as easy as kissing or falling off a roof. Of course, women are not honest, and what an extraordinarily distasteful place the world would be if they were!

Try to imagine what your feelings would be if any woman who had known you intimately for, say, three months were to tell you exactly what she thought of you! Exactly, you understand, concealing nothing, setting down naught in malice. If your imagination be not equal to the task, then consult your memory and try to recollect what your feelings were last time any woman did tell you just a little of what she thought of you.

Now then, considering that three-fourths of an ordinary man's comfort in life depends upon what his women folk think of him, or, more correctly, on what he fondly thinks they think of him, have we not sound cause to thank our lucky stars that we were born into a world in which women are not honest, in the Websterian definition of the term?

Let us ponder for a moment or two upon clothes—women's clothes—for clothes, you know, particularly women's clothes, are a sort of conduct, a form of speech; in the case of the cleverest women the subtlest of all forms of speech. Did you ever stand and look in the window of a shop in which they sell corsets?

Please note here that I would much rather have written stays than corsets, for "corsets" strikes me

as a dressmaker's sort of word, and beneath the dignity of serious journalism. But, however, I bow to modern fashion and convention, and write corsets.

Well, if you have not looked in such a shop window, do so next time the opportunity occurs; because, in order to diagnose corsets, as it were, to discern, to penetrate to the philosophy, to the inner meaning and intention of them, it is needful to see them "off," and not "on." And remember corsets are a most important and significant feature of modern feminine civilization; they are symbolical of much. You will never get anywhere near unto understanding women until you have got somewhere near unto understanding corsets. The modern woman, as presented to the eye, and, at a dance, to the touch, is built up, or, let us say, is moulded upon her corsets. They are to her what the skeleton is to an animal, what the plot is to a drama, or the thesis to a dissertation, or the creed to a religion, or the underlying principles to a political party. What she would be without them we may not know, for we may not see. But we may see them without her, in a shop window, as I said.

And there are other articles of apparel in the windows of shops that sell corsets—things indescribable, indescribable by me at any rate, but things of which I can guess the meretricious use.

The intention, the object, the final cause, of corsets, then, is to make the wearer appear what, in fact, she is not; to correct nature's errors, to mitigate nature's deficiencies, to supply nature's shortcomings, to restrain nature's too pronounced flamboyancies, to soften nature's too acute angularity. Hence they are structures of convexity and of concavity, but the convexity and the concavity are ever a little more than those of nature's sculpting. They are wonderful objects; they are even, to the trained intelligence, beautiful objects (for surely, to the trained intelligence

that which perfectly achieves its end is beautiful), but verily they are not honest. They are not "frank," as Webster has it; they are not free from duplicity or from guile!

Yet do they stand for Woman in this world of ours at this our brief moment of time in that world. They are her emblem, as the Jolly Roger was of old the emblem of another sort of buccaneer. They are her hieroglyph, her idiograph. Think what she would be without them. Think what she is in them when they are inexpensive and badly designed. But, no, do not think of her in such evil case. Try rather not to think. Such disquieting thoughts are not for those who would always look on the fair side of life.

And yet it was Marcel Prévost himself, the brilliant and perceptive author of *Lettres de Femmes* and *Les Demi-Vierges*, Marcel Prévost, to whom one had thought the heart of woman was as an open book, who in this very journal but a short while since inveighed against women for wearing corsets, and dared to advocate the unrestricted waist!

Of course, women are not honest. Is the trapper honest when he sets his snare? Is the warrior honest when he plans his ambush? Is the little, shy wild creature of the woods honest when to avoid your notice it simulates death?

How, when you come to think of it, can anything be frank, guileless, free of duplicity, that either hunts or is hunted? And woman, through all that period of her life in which she is distinctively woman, is either huntress or hunted. No better, no more significant phrase was ever minted than "The Duel of Sex," and when a skilled fencer feints to lure his adversary into rashness, is he honest? Of course he is not. Honesty in the duel is for those who wield sledge-hammers, not for such as thrust with foils.

The dishonesty, the cultivated and nurtured dishonesty, of women is as much a function of their being

as the maternal function itself. Indeed, it is connected with that, connected with infrangible links. Have you ever thought of that saying about heaven, that in heaven, "there is neither marrying nor giving in marriage?" And have you ever made anything satisfactory of it? No? Well, it is explained by another saying: "In heaven we shall know as we are known." That clears it up. If and when we, the two sexes, know all about each other, certainly there will be neither marrying nor giving in marriage.

Woman's *métier* in the world—I mean, of course, civilized woman, the woman in the world as it is—is to inspire romantic passion.

Men could do most of the things that are done in the world without woman's help. Men could reap and sow, and bake bread and cook dinners; they could build battleships and bath babies (supposing of course, they could achieve them without feminine co-operation); they could construct and maintain the world of material things pretty much as it is. But they could not write great poems or great dramas, or compose great music. For these are inspired by romantic passion, and romantic passion is inspired by women, and by women who are not honest in the sense in which we are using the term to-day. The reason why there is no great art among savages is that there is no romantic passion; there is only animal passion. Romantic passion is inspired by the women who wear corsets. In other words, by the women who pretend to be what they not quite are.

So you see, we owe most of the things upon which we set the highest value, the things that lift us to life from mere existence, to the fact that women are not honest.

I never let my thoughts wander around this matter of women's honesty without remembering a certain observation of one Gilcad P. Beck. Gilcad P. Beck is a character in Messrs. Besant and Rice's delightful

novel "The Golden Butterfly." Like so many of his enterprising and resourceful countrymen, he had earned his living in many and various avocations. Among other things he had kept an academy for young ladies, and this is what he said of his experiences thereat. Some one had remarked that girls were tender and soft little things. Gilead P. Beck did not think so. Said he: "Tender? Air they? As hickory. Soft? As the shell of a clam!" Most experienced school mistresses, I understand, appreciate that observation, and coincide with it. I have said that the dishonesty of women is a cultivated quality. It is, and the culture begins very early in life.

I regret, as I said to begin with, that the question has been so crudely framed. It had been more courteous, surely, to have demanded—Have women tact? Do they practise reticence and reservation? There is no earthly sense in calling a spade a spade if by giving it another name we can spare the gardener's sensibilities; and beyond doubt there is many a woman who would fiercely resent the charge of dishonesty who at the same time would glory in her tactfulness and plume herself prettily on her feminine reticence and diplomatic reserve.

Now I once heard a sage declare that if you showed him a tactful man you showed him a man whom he would not trust alone with his plate basket. That, I think, is going too far, but there is a core of truth in it, all the same.

Tactfulness is the strength of weak natures who know their own weakness. It is not deceit exactly, but it is over on the perilous edge of truth. It is the resource of statesmen whose diplomacy is not backed by big battalions. Now, women in their social relations are even as those statesmen are in international affairs. Their business is not, and never has been, what Dr. Max Nordau asserts that it has been and is,

to moralize the world and to raise men up to higher things. Not a bit of it. Their business is, and has been, to make the world a comfortable place for themselves to dwell in, and to make the best and the most of men as they are down here on these lower levels.

Neither of those two ends is to be achieved by "straightforwardness in conduct, thought, speech," as Webster has it. On the contrary, they are to be achieved only by the diligent and adroit exercise of whatever qualities are the very opposite of these. Goethe was hopelessly wrong, and I think, too, he must have been desperately in love—as he mostly was—when he said that "the eternal feminine beckons us ever upwards." That is just what the eternal feminine never does. It is the exceptional, the abnormal, feminine who does that, and when it beckons we rarely or never follow.

After all, experience is your safest card, and let us turn to that as we end. Look about you, and think of the women you know who are quite obviously having the best of times, who are most courted, most admired, most deferred to; who manage to secure the most faithful and forgiving husbands, the most adoring and discreet lovers, the most dutiful children even; who manage to steal horses or hearts, where other women may not look over hedges, or sit in dimly lit corners and keep their reputation. Are they the women whose lives are characterized by "straightforwardness in conduct, thought, speech, etc.; sincere, free from fraud, guile, or duplicity, open, frank?"

And so, of course, women are not honest; and for their own dear sakes, and for ours, let us hope they never will be.

## XXVIII

### CAPRICCIO

THERE come moments to all of us, I suppose, when life and its affairs seem suddenly to have become well nigh valueless; when our spirits are oppressed by an overpowering sense of the futility of things. Four o'clock A.M. of a restless, sleepless night is a time highly favourable to the coming of such moments; but sometimes they come upon us in the full glare of noon, and of them a reasonable explanation is a little more difficult to find. Personally, I am always puzzled to determine which of my moods, the pessimistic or the optimistic, let us call them, reflects most truly the actual facts of life. Is it, I ask myself, that these moments—they seldom run to hours—of depression are lucid intervals, swift flashes of insight into the very heart of things, and all the rest illusion; or, on the other hand, is my habitual mood, the mood in which the world seems a fairly decent place and myself a fairly decent fellow, the mood of real sanity? It is impossible, of course, to get at a satisfactory answer, because the answer itself would depend upon the mood of the moment. One thing at least seems certain; that if life is to be lived at all, we must accept, if only by way of a working hypothesis, the answer of the optimistic hours rather than that of the pessimistic moments, for if that is to rule our reason and our thought then comes paralysis, mental and moral. Life may

be a mistake and the world a gritty desert, but we must try not to think so more often than we are obliged. At the same time, it is as well to admit to ourselves that, even though life be not a mistake, there are good many made in it by ourselves and others, and that the world, if not a desert exactly, holds a good many sandy territories which would be all the better for a little irrigation. On those lines one can get on with one's work; on the others one must needs go straight to the deuce.

It seems to amount to something like this, then—that if pessimism is sure, practically, to be wrong, unmitigated optimism is by no means certain, practically, to be right. After the dismallest night a cold bath, a walk round the garden, and a tasty breakfast will often send pessimism to the rightabout; but then five minutes' reading of one's morning paper, reading about the sort of things that happen, here, there, and everywhere day by passing day, is very apt to give optimism a sharp smack in the face. And yet this counting-house method of dealing with the question, this setting out a debit and credit account of life and trying to strike a balance, seems, from the philosophic point of view, a poor sort of thing. What philosophy wants is a definite Yes or an unmistakable No, not a vague Perhaps. But then philosophy seldom or never gets what it wants, for there is no sort of doubt whatever that the world is not a bit the right place for philosophers. They may find themselves at home and well done by in some other world hereafter, mayhap; here, indubitably, the crossing-sweepers have a better time. But this is a digression. I must get back to the theme with which I started, and keep as close to it as possible; which will not be very close.

We ought to be upon our guard against the fallacies that lurk behind that much-used, and much ill-used, word Evolution. It is a good word, which carries its meaning on the face of it, and, moreover, it means much ; but, like many other words, it is getting dilapidated by over usage, and is in danger of becoming a cant term of science employed for the deluding of the wayfaring men, not to mention the fool. What I mean is this : we are frequently told that such and such a political institution or social custom is a product of Evolution, and therefore (this is the unspoken implication) it is all right and in its proper place. Now, of course, the bare statement is true enough, so true as to be almost superfluous ; it is the implication I beg leave to query, nay, more than to query, actually to deny. The small-pox microbe is a product of Evolution, but when it makes itself a home in my body I can't resist the conviction that, though it may be all right, it is clearly not in its proper place ; and that Evolution or no Evolution, the business of society is to wipe it out as speedily as may be. The child's new cut tooth has evolved, but then so has that last one of mine which ached so desperately that I had to knock up a dentist at one o'clock in the morning and get rid of it all at costs. Of course, men of science know all this as well as, and probably better than, I do ; but my complaint of them is that they don't talk about it, that they too often forget even to mention it ; and so we are coming to regard Evolution with a kind of superstitious awe ; a superstitious awe similar to that with which as children we used to accept the dictum of our Sunday school teachers, that as God made everything everything was good, even black beetles and birches. We knew in our hearts that something was wrong somewhere in that dictum, something either in the premiss or the conclusion, but it sounded so plausible and imposing that we just shut our eyes and swallowed it. The fact is we ought

always to bear carefully in mind that Evolution is compact, as it were, of two processes, two tendencies—one making for progress, for life; the other for degeneration, for death; that both processes are going on at the same time, and that one is fully as strong as the other, quite as real, I mean. The problem always is to discover with which of the two we are face to face at any particular time. Take, for instance, these Trusts and Combines which are causing so much to-do in the financial and industrial world. It is easy enough to show that they have evolved quite naturally and according to an ascertained law from the Competitive industrial system, which, in its day, evolved from the system that preceded it; but for all that they are no less likely to make for the misery of mankind. They may not, of course, but there is no reason to assume offhand that they won't. Evolution must really consent to be criticized. We were ready enough to bow speechless in the presence of a Creator; but now that Science has, or thinks it has, got rid of a Creator, we are assuredly not going to stand any nonsense from Evolution.

The same sort of considerations apply to that other bogey-like entity, the Past—the Past with a capital P I mean. To tell me that an institution or a social custom, again, has its foundations laid deeply in the Past is not to invest it with any sort of honour or dignity in my irreverent eyes. I decline to venerate, or possibly even to respect it. Personally, I should prefer to do a little founding on my own account, just as my forefathers did on theirs; for I can't forget that I, too, shall some day be the Past, that I, too, am a forefather. The fact that an institution or social custom was so admirably suited to my forefathers is of itself a reason why it should not be quite so admirably suited to me, for I am not my forefathers,

and my circumstances are not theirs. We have as much right to dictate to our ancestors as they to dictate to us. And to do them justice, poor, honest fellows, they don't attempt anything of the sort. It is we, owls that we are, who try to find out what our ancestors did and said, and then dictate that to ourselves. There has arisen a school—or perhaps hardly a school, a class, let us say—of philosophers (they like to be called philosophers, and we may as well be polite) who are seeking to impose upon us a new tyrant which they call the Future. Possibly a change of masters may come as a sort of relief; but I confess I regard that Future with a distrustful and a suspicious eye. I like not these abstractions with capital letters. The mind positively reels when it conjures up the picture of tortured mankind being held back on one side by the Past and dragged along on the other by the Future. Ah, if we could only get shut of them both and enjoy ourselves to the length of our tether in the present; which, you observe, I decline to spell with a capital P.

But we can't. I realized that with overwhelming force the other day, when one of those moods I spoke of above came over me as I stood under the dome of the reading-room in the British Museum, and looked round at all those books and felt the presence of all the other books, out of sight, but really there, in dark cellars and on dusty shelves; and then all the manuscripts and the files of old newspapers and the bound volumes of old, forgotten magazines. I felt it, too, perhaps even more devastatingly, as I cast my eyes, my newly awakened eyes, as it seemed to me, on the men and women bending over the desks in the hot August air, and grubbing, delving, mining into the Past; trying to rediscover things that had been already discovered and forgotten ten times over in the centuries

of the Past. Then I remembered that I, too, had come there to search for awhile among worm-eaten pages, pages that told of things that never mattered much even in their own day and generation, and that mattered less than nothing now. I was conscious that I, too, was under the thralldom of the Past, and that its cold, dead hand had got me by the throat. I asked myself there and then, "What is the good of it all? What is it all for?" and, further, "What is the harm of it?" And when one asks those questions of any still standing monument of the Past, I care not what it is, strange answers spring to the lips, and queer things happen in the mind. I became, in a flash, a revolutionist of blood-red hue, nay more, an anarchist, a "petroleur." Could my will have taken shape in action at that moment, the British Museum, with its books, its manuscripts, its records, and its mummied cats and men, would have been blown into the air with a mighty blast, would have gone up in a cloud of dust and débris, to be rebuilt later on as a great nursery, liberally furnished with toys, for London's toyless children. Aye, and we may see that yet if many men on one fine day were to get such a moment as mine.

The moment passed, of course, though I didn't wait for the polite official to bring me the volume I had ordered. I couldn't quite stand that, and I hurried out into the sunlit air, in so great haste to escape from the Past that I was nearly run over by a hansom cab of the present. Yes, yes, the moment passed, but the memory of it, the suggestion of it, haunts me still to-day as I sit here in my own study surrounded by my own books. Even now, when I suppose you would say I am restored to sanity and right thinking, I feel not so sure but that if mankind could pull itself together for one tremendous deed of iconoclasm, the like of which the world has never

seen, and were utterly to destroy and extirpate every written and printed record of the Past, were to annihilate the Past so far as annihilation may go, I am not so sure, I say, that mankind would not have done the wisest act of its existence since its first hairy ancestor stood up on his hind legs, gazed around him, and came to the premature conclusion that he was no longer an ape. Just think what it would mean, that getting rid of the Dead Hand once for all, and burying it out of sight for ever with whatever of ceremony seemed most fitting ! Just think what it would mean to stand free of the Past, of the written, the recorded Past, and to have to think and do things on our own, as it were ! There would be some loss, of course—there is no change without loss—a good many professors of history would be driven to seek other modes of livelihood, quite a lot of High Court judges would be deprived of a lucrative job ; but how deeply we should all breathe when once the dust had settled down again !

There would be no more precedents save only such as existed in the memories of living men, and a man's memory can always be queried, often confounded, whereas a written precedent knocks you down. We should lose history, and after all is not history itself, as the greatest of modern historians himself has said, " little but a record of the crimes and follies of mankind ? " Just heaven, have we not crimes and follies enough of our own that we should need to mouth and mumble the sins and shortcomings of the men who are dead ? A good deal of literature would perish ! Well, the stronger reason for us to set to and write some more, to be, after its day, let us hope, dealt with by our descendants in like manful fashion. But greatest, and oh ! best of all, we should have to use our own brains upon our own business, to attack every

difficulty as it arose with whatever of living common sense we might have, and without reference to what other men did, under apparently similar but really quite different circumstances. That is where the gain would come ; that living problems would be tackled by living minds ; that in our most hard-set moments there would be no calling upon the Dead Hand to help us—as though that had ever done aught but strangle ! And there would really be no anarchy, you know, no disorder ; everything would go on quite comfortably without the records. It is not memory of the yesterdays that causes us to behave ourselves with propriety to-day. It is our sense, our to-day's sense, of what makes for our own convenience. Given a lively appreciation of that, and things will arrange themselves smoothly enough, never fear. We may safely away with all the rest. O, history !

1902.

## XXIX

### A QUESTION OF CONSCIENCE

WITH my eyes still dazzled and my brain still bewildered by columns of electoral figures in this morning's paper, and with the noise of last night's fireworks celebrant of electoral victories still buzzing in my ears, it is difficult almost to impossibility for me to write of anything to-day but of the all-pervasive and all-pervading topic.

Nevertheless, I feel that the difficulty must be somehow surmounted, the temptation somehow resisted, for I have a conviction that the readers of the *Sunday Chronicle* will expect, and be relieved to find, a quiet column of their paper undisturbed by the hurly-burly. For my own part I can only say that I found myself this morning reading with unwonted interest the prices in the Billingsgate Fish Market, a thing I don't remember ever to have done before ; so good it was to get away out of the row for a minute or two. Any port in a storm.

Political contests come and (happily) go, but the larger and deeper and more difficult problems of life remain, not to be settled by a counting of heads, and it is with such a problem that I desire to deal to-day. Political questions ruffle the surface of life ; questions of conscience stir the gloomy and hidden depths.

A question of conscience was put to me a day or two ago by a correspondent, who assured me that for

years he had been a constant reader of this journal, and who appeared to think (and rightly) that the fact gave him a certain claim upon my time, my attention, and what brains I have. He is an artist, he tells me, an illustrator in black and white, and he is dependent, entirely, upon the work of his hands and the inspiration of his æsthetic sense. His trouble, put briefly, is this :

When he accomplishes a piece of work that satisfies his own artistic demands, that he feels can confidently challenge artistic criticism, a piece of work on which he has laboured long and carefully, into which, as he says, he has put the best that is in him, he finds either that he cannot sell it at all or that he can sell it only for rather less money than he could have earned in the same time by sweeping a crossing or by cleaning boots. The reason editors and publishers of magazines and books give him for rejecting his work altogether, or for paying a starvation price for it, is not that it is not good enough, but that it is too good.

"Our public doesn't want this sort of thing," they say. "They're not up to it; it only puzzles them. They don't understand art, and they don't like it. What they want is something catchy, something gripping, or something with a good broad dash of sentimentality in it. Give 'em that and the rest doesn't matter. Of course we, we editors and publishers, know a good thing when we see it. But we must give the public what it wants or go under, and therefore you must give us what we want or . . . !"

When, on the other hand, he does what he calls "downright rotten work, work done anyhow," work that is dashed off when he's half asleep or thinking of something else, it sells like hot cakes and sells at good prices. Then they who sit in the Seats of the Mighty welcome him with "That's the sort of

thing to sell, Mr. —— ; let's have more of that and as quickly as you can turn it out."

In fact, it comes to this, he informs me, "If I like to turn out bad stuff by the acre, stuff that I know to be bad, careless in drawing, bungled in composition, vulgar in feeling, sticky in sentiment, stuff that it makes me sick to look at after it is done, I can easily make enough to live in comfort, not to say in luxury, and to run a nice little studio in Chelsea. If I do the sort of work that I know to be good, work that would win the approval of my own artistic conscience and the praise of my brother artists, I can perhaps just manage to drag out a bare existence on bread and onions in a garret."

"Now, what am I do to?" he ends by asking, "Sacrifice my conscience to my tummy or my tummy to my conscience? Tell me, O Sage of the *Sunday Chronicle*. Tell me, you who claim to be a professor of the fine art of life."

It is a knotty problem, but let us see if we can't do something partially to unravel it; to get it quite straightened out is past praying for.

To begin with, it is obviously not a question which bothers artists alone among the sons and daughters of men. It twitches the soul-strings of men and women in pretty well every department of life.

Journalists, for instance, when they know that they can write two bad articles in less time and with less trouble than it takes them to write one good one; and when they know further that they will receive twice as much for the two bad as they will for the one good.

Writers of books, who realize that they can produce six rubbishy novels in one year by babbling into a phonograph, and thus make an income, whereas by using their brains and a quill pen they can produce one worthy work and fail to meet the milk bill.

The hard-bitten doctor, who is convinced that the

stuff he prescribes will do the patient not an atom of good, but is convinced also that if he doesn't prescribe it he will lose the patient and the fee.

The shopkeeper, who exhibits in his window the cheap and nasty because experience has informed him that the costly and excellent will not "go off." The weekly wage-earner in workshop or factory, who spends his ten hours a day in the furious production of muck scarce good enough for the dust destroyer.

Look where you will throughout our whole industrial and social life and you find necessity making the same demand of honour. If you peeped into the statesman's study, I make no doubt, you would there discover the same disturbing predicament.

Well now, to come straight to the gist of the matter. We do well to realize that we live in a real and not in an ideal world; a world that was already made for us when we came into it, a world that we have done nothing whatever to make and that we can do precious little to alter. This world, this rummy jumble of a world, we must take more or less for granted. We can leave it, of course, whenever we like, but if we decide to stay in it we must stay in it on its terms and not on ours. It is not, as Mr. H. G. Wells suggests it is, a lump of clay which we can take into our hands, and mould to our pattern. On the contrary, it is we who are the clay, and it is the world who will do most of the moulding.

The best we can hope for is to get just a little bit of our own way. Life, if it is to be lived at all, must be a continual compromise, a compromise in which there must be ever so much more give than take.

Those of us who are not of the Blessed, whose incomes, that is, are not derived from gilt-edged securities, can remain in this world only by making for it something that, rightly or wrongly, it wants; by meeting its needs. Come to think of it dis-

passionately, there is no reason at all why the world should keep us for doing things it doesn't want done. We all of us act on that principle in our private lives. If I find the housemaid playing the piano never so beautifully when I want my study dusted, there are words between us, words implying a month's notice. She may, in her heart of hearts, feel sure that what I want is beautiful music; but I in my inmost soul am convinced that what I want is a clean and tidy study. I cannot for the life of me allow that that housemaid would be injuring her conscience or smirching her honour if she forwent her inclination to play Chopin's Nocturnes and devoted herself wholeheartedly to the dustpan and brush. Where her conscience would be injured and her honour smirched would be if she were to do her dusting badly, carelessly, or to leave it undone.

I recognize, of course, that the analogy is not yet complete. The girl might turn on me and say: "Don't you see, you insensate blockhead, that I am made for better things than dusting? Is it right that a woman who can play Chopin as I can should waste her time in making a fastidious person like you comfortable?"

In that case, the answer comes pat enough. It is: "In heaven's name, then, my dear girl, abandon domestic service for the concert hall." To which she might make the further rejoinder, "Ah, but the public is as dull and deaf as you are. They don't want my music either. I cannot live on music." There follows, naturally, the crushing reply, "Then die on it, or do your dusting like a decent girl."

Now, it seems to me the analogy is quite complete, and we have got to the very core of the matter. Let my artist correspondent (and he must stand for all sorts and conditions of men in similar perplexity), if he cannot live by the production of good drawings,

try how he gets on by sweeping crossings ; but let him sweep them and his own conscience clean. Or by the polishing of boots ; but let him see to it that he leaves those boots and his own honour bright and shining. Then let him retire to his garret, eat his bread and onions with an appetite and look his God in the face.

That is a hard, rough way of escape from the dilemma ? I know it. There is, fortunately for most of us, a way less hard and less rough. It is true the world may demand things which we, with our superior wisdom and more cultivated taste, may regard as bad things. But at least if the world wants bad things it is not such a fool as to want those bad things badly done. It may, for instance, prefer dance music or even comic songs to classical symphonies. Well, in that case if we want to live comfortably in it we must give it dance music and comic songs, and not persist in thrusting upon it classical symphonies. But if we are honest folk we shall give it good dance music, the best that is in us, and good, that is really comic, songs. In the deep degradation of its literary taste the world may prefer sentimental stories of domestic life or blood-and-thunder melodramas to carefully wrought problem novels or plays whose point is characterization. But that is no reason why we should not see to it that our sentiment is genuine sentiment, our domestic sketches true to life ; nor why we should not “ jine the flats ” of our melodramas.

In the opinion of the shoemaker buttoned boots may be superior to laced boots. But if the public will have naught to say to buttons the bootmaker must put his preferences in his pocket, and either turn to another trade or make boots that lace. But in common honesty he must so arrange it that his laces shall be good laces and his boots well sewn and of sound leather. Let him do but that and

although he may not be happy all will be right with his conscience.

In truth the world is not quite so unkind a place as it sometimes seems to the overwrought imagination or to the sickly conscience. The alternatives it offers to the most of us are seldom—Death or Dishonour. It is only in the melodramas that we come upon so deadly a choice.

In actual life, in the life of every day, it is rarely that one is called upon to choose between disgrace and a modest living; a modest living is not in the workaday world, as a rule, incompatible with common honesty. When the tug-of-war—the eternal war between Light and Darkness—does come, the question is not one between honesty and a decent livelihood, but between honesty and wealth. There is not much real difficulty in settling that. Let him who then chooses wealth and a dirty conscience choose it and be damned; probably in this life, certainly, if there be another, in the next.

It is a personal question after all, the most personal, the most individual of all questions that can for a moment bemuddle a human soul. It is a question which each must answer for himself and which no prophet, priest, or even journalist can answer for him. In the Court of Conscience there are no whipping-boys, no substitutes purchasable. Every man is his own judge, his own jury, his own executioner, and he must, indeed, be a poor and a pitiful sort of criminal who protests against the verdict that he himself has found, or whines at the punishment that he has inflicted upon himself.

And yet . . . I don't know . . . it seems an odd sort of speculation to indulge in just now . . . to-day when all this hubbub is going on outside, when men are hurriedly casting votes into the ballot-boxes, noisily acclaiming triumphs and lugubriously explaining away defeats . . . but is there such a thing as

ONE-self? Are there not in each of us two selves? The little Self and the big Self; the low Self and the high Self; the Self that is always for dabbling in the mud and the Self that aches towards the stars? All through the ages we have called this other Self by many names; God, the Ideal, the Higher Nature, the Good, the Beautiful, the True, the Holy Ghost; and by naming it have we not acknowledged its reality? It is always with us; watching our work; there to applaud the decent, to condemn the disgusting. Sometimes the vision of it is clear as noon-day, sometimes obscure as midnight; sometimes altogether lost. And, if it be indeed lost, then is all else lost also. And questions of conscience do not arise any more. For the man is dead . . . and rotten . . . only the machine remains to cumber the ground.

1906.

## XXX

### THE "SOFTNESS" OF THE WORKERS

A DAY or two ago, when idly glancing through the correspondence columns of a daily contemporary, I came upon a letter which first made me start up in anger, then filled me with a sensation of physical nausea, and finally induced in me a mental state of sheer bewilderment.

Ever since I read that precious letter I have from time to time caught myself thinking about it and about the moral and intellectual attitude of its writer. I have just read it again, and once more I feel angry, a little sick, and very puzzled. Therefore I must pray you to forgive me if in this article there is rather less of the philosophic tone and temper than is usual, I fain would hope, in the articles I write week by week.

The letter is written over the signature of Raymond Blathwayt, a name which in some dim way seemed strangely familiar to me, but which, rack my memory as I would and did, I could not for the life of me connect with any distinguished achievement, either literary or other. At last I did seem to recall the name as that of a professional interviewer of titled personages and of other persons more or less prominently before the public, whose recorded interviews had always about them a tang of conventionalism which not infrequently came perilously near to snobbism itself.

In this, however, my memory may be at fault, and if it be I apologize to Mr. Raymond Blathwayt for its defect.

What I will not apologize for is what I am going to say now : that never in my life have I found so much evidence of so much ignorance and prejudice (which, combined, make up stupidity) existing in any human mind as is discovered in that short letter of less than three hundred words ! The letter begins thus : “ May I not suggest that the present morbid, vulgar, sentimentality of the English populace is due to the insurgence of the Board School element during the last forty-five years ? ”

Observe, I beg you, how the writer, with calm insolence, takes for granted the point, the fact in dispute, which, if he has the brains of a hen, he must know to be the point, the fact, in dispute—or at least highly disputable. It is a stale trick of the controversial charlatan, the employment of a well-known fallacy, against which all writers on Logic, from Aristotle to our time, have carefully warned us.

Mr. Blathwayt assumes, as though it were universally admitted, that the English populace—by which phrase he must mean the English working-classes, for otherwise the phrase were meaningless—are morbidly sentimental. In support of his assumption he adduces no shred of evidence, he calls not one witness. May we not on our side assume that he does not because he cannot ? Let us therefore see if we can find what truth there is in his accusation, against the English working-classes, of morbid sentimentality.

To be morbid is to be diseased. Sentimentality, the dictionaries tell us, is the indulgence of sentiments for their own sake, artificial or affected tenderness. Does one find either of these phenomena among the miners, for example, or among the textile workers, or among the boilermakers or the agricultural labourers, or on the railways, or in the army, the navy, the police force ?

And if any of these classes affect a tenderness they do not feel, will Mr. Blathwayt tell us towards whom or towards what they affect it? They are, it is true, both more and less tender than they were. They are more tender to one another, more compunctious of one another's sufferings and deprivations, more resentful of one another's wrongs; and, at the same time, less tender towards the classes whom they justly or unjustly are coming to believe are largely responsible for, and heedless of, those wrongs, deprivations and sufferings.

In other words, these masses of men are becoming more—to use a phrase dear to the early Socialists—“class-conscious” than they were. But is this growth of class sentiment—slow enough as it is, God wot!—affected, artificial, or is it, on the other hand, one of the most portentous of social realities? If it be real, then, whether it be for good or evil, it is not sentimental.

The only sentiment expressed either in words or in deeds by the English working-classes during the last decade or so, has been one of deep and continuous discontent with their wages and with the conditions in which they labour and live. In point of fact, on all other matters they manifest considerably less feeling than it was aforetime their wont to display. The sentiment of discontent would seem to have swamped and to have stifled all other sentiments.

But does Mr. Blathwayt hold that the discontent of an agricultural labourer with the pittance he earns or with the hovel in which he and his family are forced to dwell is an “affected” discontent, that it is “put on” as it were, that the man does not really feel it? If he do not hold this, then is he grossly misusing the language—no doubt ignorantly—when he accuses the labourer of morbidity and sentimentality.

When the English trade unionists put their hands into their none-too-well-lined pockets and drew there-

from sixpences and shillings for the relief of the families of their fellows locked out in Dublin, were they merely “showing off,” does Mr. Blathwayt think? Is it morbid, symptomatic of disease that is, to be moved at the sight of, or even at the thought of, a starving child?

When men down tools—and at the same time down incomes—in protest against some act of petty tyranny, either real or imagined, practised upon one of their mates, they are motivated by sentiment, no doubt, the sentiment of justice. But sentimentality? No!

And here I pause for a breathing-space to wonder what would be Mr. Blathwayt’s feelings if, in payment of one of his interviews with distinguished personages, his Editor were to forward him a postal order and stamps for five-and-threepence! Would his amazement and indignation be morbidly, vulgarly sentimental?

The next sentence of the letter runs:

“The other part of the populace has been educated—or, rather, dragged up—in the unspeakably horrible atmosphere of the Board and County Council schools, with the inevitable result that they view life from an angle of vision which takes no cognisance of discipline, reverence, self-knowledge, reticence, or self-control.”

Has the writer of that stupendous and libellous nonsense ever been inside a County Council school, I wonder, inside even the worst-equipped school of the most parsimonious of County Councils? Or did he write that sentence at the dictation of a morbid imagination? I sincerely hope that the latter is the correct alternative, because if it is only that his imagination has become diseased it may be cured by a course of physical exercise, moral sanitation, and a change of air. But if he has been inside a County Council school and can write such flapdoodle, then is he incurable and past all praying for.

When he speaks of the “unspeakably horrible atmosphere” of the schools, does he mean the physical atmosphere? I should like to think he does, for here is indeed room for improvement. There are still schools—shame be to us!—in which the children are too many and the cubic feet of space too few. But Mr. Blathwayt will not permit me to think that; his context makes it plain that what he stigmatizes as “unspeakably horrible” is the moral, the spiritual atmosphere of the schools.

I have called his statement libellous. I wrote down that word with deliberation, for it is no other than a grotesque and malignant libel to assert of thousands of men and women who, underpaid and under-valued, in the face of extreme difficulty and often of wilful discouragement, are conscientiously endeavouring to make the very best that may be made of the young human material that is committed to their hands, that they are turning it out with “no cognisance of discipline, reverence, self-knowledge, reticence, or self-control.”

To attempt to argue or to remonstrate with a writer who, even in the fever throes of a morbid imagination, could be guilty of such a libel as that were to waste words. The best—indeed, the only rational—way in which to deal with false assertion, unsupported by evidence and based, if based at all, on prejudice and ignorance, is to meet it with true counter-assertion verifiable by whomsoever cares to verify it, and supported by common experience.

I meet Mr. Blathwayt’s false assertion, then, with a true one—that never in our country’s history have so many of her children been so well taught, in all the subjects that are teachable in the wretchedly exiguous time given to teaching, or so well trained in habits of discipline, reverence, self-knowledge, reticence, self-control, personal cleanliness, and courtesy, as there are to-day.

To say that much is, of course, to say little, deplorably little. From the bottom of one's heart and from the centre of one's brain one wishes that one could say more, but to say less than that were to be guilty of flat falsehood. Discipline and self-control—if you are inclined to doubt the inculcation of these take the trouble to be present in the school nearest your own home when what I think is called fire drill is toward. Then at the sound of a bell—no youngster in the school knowing whether the sound portend peril real or imaginary—you will see the children, from the biggest to the smallest, put down their work, rise in their places, fall into ranks, and without haste or flurry march out of the building with the steadiness and precision of a battalion of his Majesty's Guards.

It is only fair to Mr. Blathwayt to say that he has a remedy to propose. The instrument with which he would cleanse and clarify “the unspeakably horrible atmosphere” of our schools and ironize the soft hearts and soft heads of the next generation is not of his own invention. It is as old as the bestial instinct it symbolizes. It is the Rod—the Rod in all its varieties—the cane, the birch, the ash-stick, the ebony ruler, the whip, and, we may not doubt, the cat-o'-nine-tails. Here is the passage in which he makes his suggestion unmistakable :

“Is there a County Council schoolboy to-day who could stand a good Winchester ‘tunding,’ or any one of them who could contemplate with equanimity the prospect of being ‘horsed,’ as we were in the old days, and as boys are even now in any public school worth the name? Could anything be more hopelessly opposed to the idea of all discipline than the method by which a Board School boy who has received a well-merited caning from his master can turn round and summon that master before the magistrates as they do to-day? Can any master carry out his duty to

his boys, his school, or his country who is so ridiculously handicapped as are the Board School masters of to-day ? ”

Oh, the stale old stuff, the thin-worn shoddy ! Does Mr. Blathwayt really think we have forgotten the senile babblement of the retired and ridiculous colonels and the superannuated and silly admirals at the time when the nation was making up its mind to abolish flogging in the army and navy ? “ Without the triangle and the cat the Services will go to the dogs, sir,” they muttered and mumbled in the House and in the clubs. The triangle and the cat have gone the way of the rack and the thumb-screw, and the discipline in the barrack-yard and the fo’c’sle was never so perfect, the conduct of our seamen and soldiers was never so admirable as they are to-day.

Which, you know, was exactly what was to have been expected—expected, that is, by every one with intelligence above that of a Hottentot. “ Any fool,” said Cavour, “ can govern in a state of siege.” But, then, Cavour was a statesman, not a—well, not Mr. Blathwayt. The enforcement of discipline without corporal punishment calls for a fine character and a strong will ; to enforce discipline with corporal punishment needs only a muscular arm and a brutal nature.

Where was it engendered, and how has it been kept alive, this antic notion that there is something manly, something almost noble, in lying acquiescent while somebody else stronger than yourself beats you with a stick ? Such submission one would have thought to be more characteristic of the ass than of the man. It is, indeed, proverbially characteristic of the ass.

It bores me, until my limbs and my brain stiffen, this fatuous middle-class chatter about the “ softness ” of the working-classes. Softness, save the mark ! Soft, are they ?—the men who plough the fields, who

hew the coal, who quarry the rock, who smelt the ore, who drive the express engine through the fog, who sail the wind-jammer round The Horn, and who, in the hour of our need, shed their blood for us on land and sea. Pah ! the rubbish stinks !

1914.

THE END

## TO THE READER

*WHEN Hubert was dead, many who had been used to read what he wrote, week by week, sent letters to me asking that some of what he had written should be put together in a book ; some asked especially to have in the book this or that piece of his mind which they had admired when they first read it. I have made here such a book. But if I had included in it all the pieces which I was prayed to include, it would have been a book of many volumes. Therefore, I ask those who do not find here exactly that which they wished to see reprinted not to think me careless or unmindful of their wishes, but to understand that I*

have done what I could. It may be that later I shall be able to bring together another book of the same nature as this. I have not altered anything here. Hubert wrote as he spoke and he spoke as he thought. He never did for money or for fame sell himself. He had, in the highest degree, the quality of intellectual honesty. He would not deceive himself, nor would he suffer others to be deceived. His was the large tolerance of one who understands the weakness and the strength of the soul of man. He hated the Pharisees, the Priests, the Puritans, and those who grind the faces of the poor. All men else he loved.

Two years before his death, blindness came upon him, blindness for which there was no hope of cure, blindness darkening the world daily more and more. Hubert met it like a man.

On November 1906, while still he was well and strong, he wrote: "A man who is smitten by an incurable disease, a disease for which science has so far discovered no remedy or even alleviation, and who doesn't whimper or whine about it, or make himself a nuisance to his family and friends, who bears it 'like a man' as we say, who keeps a cheerful countenance and continues to do what little work his affliction permits him to perform, is a fine and a wise fellow, and, in his way, a hero."

Hubert worked to the last, he died working, and his last words when he felt the hand of death upon him were, "I am not hurt."

E. NESBIT BLAND

West Hall, Kent,  
June 1914

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